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10

Suzanne Moore
Indecency is what
we really want page 19



THE INDEPENDENT

3,108

FRIDAY 4 OCTOBER 1996

WEATHER Sun and showers

40P OR 40P

Kevin Maxwell hid £32m pension switch

STEVE BOGGAN
Chief Reporter

Kevin Maxwell concealed a £32m share transfer from Mirror Group pension fund officials which was later used to raise a £22.5m loan for a private Maxwell company.

Inquiries by *The Independent* have established that Kevin was instrumental in transferring the shares away from the pension funds, but he failed to tell fund administrators for more than 13 months that the shares had gone. It was not until Robert Maxwell died that the men running the funds found out that the shares had been removed, and they have still not been recovered.

Details of the transaction

were not put before the jury that cleared Kevin, his brother, Ian, and their associate, Larry Iraichenberg, last January. The shares are now the subject of litigation in the French courts.

Sources involved in running the pension funds – who say they feel deceived by Kevin – are understood to be disappointed that the Serious Fraud Office did not include details of his role in the affair in the indictments against him.

Our inquiries have established that Kevin told neither the group pension funds manager, Trevor Cook, the pensions investment administration manager, Harold Abrahart, nor the pensions department financial controller, Jeff Highfield, that the stock had been removed, and pledged as collateral against a £22.5m loan to Headington Holdings, one of Robert Maxwell's private companies.

All three men believed the 2,228,479 shares in a French investment trust, Paris-based Eniris, had remained in the funds' portfolio.

"He had lots of opportunities to tell us that the shares were gone, but he said nothing month after month," said a former senior pension fund source. "Each month, a sched-

uled meeting was produced with the Euris stock still on the list. He knew they were no longer there, but didn't tell us."

There were also at least three formal meetings of trustees when the misleading schedule was produced, but he said nothing. Finally, when Robert died, we were left believing we held these shares for the pensioners when, in fact, they had been pledged to a bank more than a year earlier."

The disclosures coincide with concerns voiced last week by George Staple, director of the SFO, over the "emasculations" of prosecutors in large fraud cases. A Court of Appeal ruling in the Blue Arrow case required the prosecution to pare down indictments into sets of easily understandable cases.

However, when dealing with Kevin-Maxwell, Mr Justice Buckley said it should be "unusual" for a second trial to take place.

"The position now," said Mr Staple, "is that in the most complex fraud cases, the indictment, already reduced to the bare minimum, will be split up to produce a series of manageable trials. But it is very unlikely that a second trial will ever take place."

The man in charge of recording the movements of shares to and from the Maxwell pension funds was Harold Abrahart. He drew up a monthly schedule of shares in the funds' possession. For 13 months before Robert Maxwell died, his schedule showed that the Euris shares were still held by the pension funds – because no one told him they had been removed.

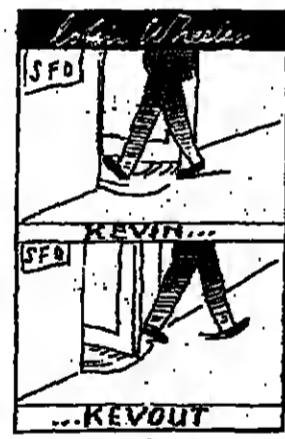
Mr Abrahart said: "I should have been told about any sales or transfers of shares from the pension schemes to anybody, be it to another company in-house or to a stockbroker in order to enable me to keep track of which shares we still owned."

Asked if he believed Kevin Maxwell ought to have told him the shares had been transferred, he replied: "Absolutely."

It is not known to what extent Kevin kept other trustees informed. This included his father, Robert, and brother, Ian.

Kevin Maxwell was asked to comment via his solicitors, but no reply was forthcoming. However, Keith Oliver, of Peters and Peters, said: "Given that Mr Maxwell's conduct in the course of his directorship of Bishopgate Investment Management Ltd and the Maxwell private companies was examined in the criminal trial, it seems to me unfair and inappropriate for you to be conducting some sort of trial by newspaper."

Fragile pyramid, page 2



Quarter of world's mammals face oblivion



Red for danger: Some of the world's threatened and endangered species on the new Red List published this week

Photo montage: Jonathan Anstee

NICHOLAS SCHOON
Environment Correspondent

A quarter of the world's mammal species are threatened with extinction, according to an exhaustive analysis of the state of the planet's animal life.

The latest Red List from the IUCN, the World Conservation Union, published this week says 911 animal species are critically endangered – meaning they are in real danger of extinction within a few years. They range from mammals like the Siberian tiger to tiny insects and fish.

The total number of recorded extinc-

tions among both plants and animals over the past 400 years is put at 1,265 species. But scientists agree many more were wiped out by humanity before they were even discovered and described. The prime cause of the extinctions are destruction of natural habitats to create farmland and provide timber, hunting, collection for the pet trade and pollution.

In its 1994 Red List the IUCN, an international grouping of voluntary and government conservation bodies, judged 18 per cent of mammal species to be threatened – their population had fallen sharply and there was at least

some danger of extinction. That was based on incomplete information. Since then the mammals have joined the more numerous birds to become the only two classes of animal for which full assessments of conservation status has been done.

For birds, the threatened proportion is put at 11 per cent.

"We've now got a much fuller, more objective," said Georgia Mace of the Institute of Zoology in London, who helped produce the new list. "The most significant finding is that 25 percent of mammals are threatened." But she judged freshwater species

of fish, reptile and amphibian around the world to be most endangered.

The Red List divides threatened species into three categories – critically endangered, endangered and vulnerable – based on population decline, scarcity and distribution. For mammals, the respective numbers are 169 species, 315 and 612, and the percentages are 4, 7 and 14.

The number of individual animals left in the wild is a few hundred, or at most, a few thousand. The vaquita, a porpoise found in Mexico's Gulf of California, is down to just 96 individuals.

In Brazil there is just one male Spix's macaw left in the wild – about 30 are in captivity.

Later this year the Cambridge-based World Conservation Monitoring Centre, which did much of the work on the Red List, will produce a list of threatened plants. Published with the Royal Botanic Gardens, Edinburgh, it will show that 33,730 higher plant species, 13 per cent of all that are known, are threatened.

"Going, Going, Gone", an independent World Wide Fund for Nature book on Britain's threatened wildlife, written by Nicholas Schoon, is published by Bookman Publishers next month.

Labour peeress forced out in Greer scandal

PETER VICTOR

The controversy over payments to Mr Greer claimed another political victim last night when Labour front-bencher Baroness Turner of Camden, the party's employment spokesperson in the Lords, was forced to resign.

She was asked to resign after the party became aware she had given a television interview in which she defended the lobbyist at the centre of the cash for questions controversy, Ian Greer.

Lady Turner, a director of Ian Greer Associates, agreed "it would be inappropriate to remain on the front bench after giving the interview to Channel 4."

Her resignation was announced by the Labour Party

before the interview was broadcast.

Interviewed about Mr Greer's decision to abandon his libel case against the *Guardian*, Lady Turner said: "It is always a lottery to enter into litigation but I did firmly believe, and I still firmly believe, in the innocence of Ian Greer and I will continue to support him while I believe that."

She saw no reason why she should not be a front bench spokesperson while also being a director of Mr Greer's company, one of the most prominent parliamentary lobbying groups.

Lady Turner said Mr Greer was "absolutely in the clear. I have no intention of resigning because to do so would look as though I believed some-

thing in the allegations and I don't."

"I am quite certain Ian has behaved completely honourably throughout."

"My position is absolutely clear: while I continue to believe in his innocence I shall continue to support him and I shall continue to remain a member."

She defended Mr Greer's payment of £10,000 to British Hamilton for business introductions the MP made.

"It is quite a standard commercial practice to pay commission to people who introduce business to you," she said.

Asked if she thought she should remain as a front bench Labour spokesman she said that was a matter for the Labour leadership, although

she saw no reason why she should not.

The party leadership apparently did not agree with Lady Turner and within hours the Labour Party's leader in the Lords, Lord Richard, issued a statement announcing her resignation.

"There is no suggestion that she has acted improperly in her capacity as a director of his company," Lord Richard said.

He added that he accepted that Lady Turner was speaking in a personal capacity.

"However, after discussing the matter with her, she has agreed it would be inappropriate for her to remain as Labour's front bench spokesperson on employment and is therefore stepping down."

SCARRETTA
COMES TO
TOWN

in the
electrifying
new bestseller

by

PATRICIA
CORNWELL

Queen scornful of Diana's bulimia

PAUL VALLEY

The degree of ferocity and bitterness which surrounded the divorce of the Prince and Princess Wales – and the extent to which constitutional considerations vied with personal animosity – is revealed in the biography of the Queen by biographer Ben Pimlott.

A deep anger lay behind the Queen's decision at the end of 1995 to take control of the situation as her son and daughter-in-law moved slowly and publicly towards divorce.

Prompted by the Princess of Wales's interview on BBC1's *Panorama* a month before the

revels an extract from the book published in *The Independent* today. "According to one close source, they came out of a deep exasperation, and of a desire to state her position in incontrovertible prose because... 'bulimia re-wrote history in 24 hours'."

Pimlott's account is based on confidential interviews with the Queen's closest friends and most senior advisers, including Princess Margaret. The book also reveals that the Queen was aware before the wedding of Charles and Diana – "because a courtier had felt bound to tell her" – of Charles's relationship with Camilla Parker Bowles.

The tone of the letters was more measured than she felt,

Pimlott says, "The knowledge of this prosaic liaison, and the desire that he should put it behind him" may have encouraged in the Queen hopes that Charles's friendship with Diana, whose grandmother had been a courtier for 20 years, would lead to a marriage.

The result was a fateful collision, which drew the royally-connected adolescent and the Prince into a marriage of convenience that was disguised to everybody, including themselves, as a love match ... The Queen played a part in the collision. In the autumn of 1980, she asked Diana to Balmoral.

Family in crisis, page 18

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QUICKLY
Silent but deadly
Every member of the SAS and SBS is to sign a personal contract undertaking never to publish details of their unit and how they do their work. Page 8

Fares hopes sink
The bonanza of cheap cross-Channel fares is unlikely to be repeated following yesterday's merger announcement by the two main ferry operators, P&O and Stena.

Watercolour triumph
The Tate Gallery has acquired a £5m watercolour collection, said to be one of the most significant collections of British work to have remained in private hands. Page 7

news

Blast closes Severn bridges

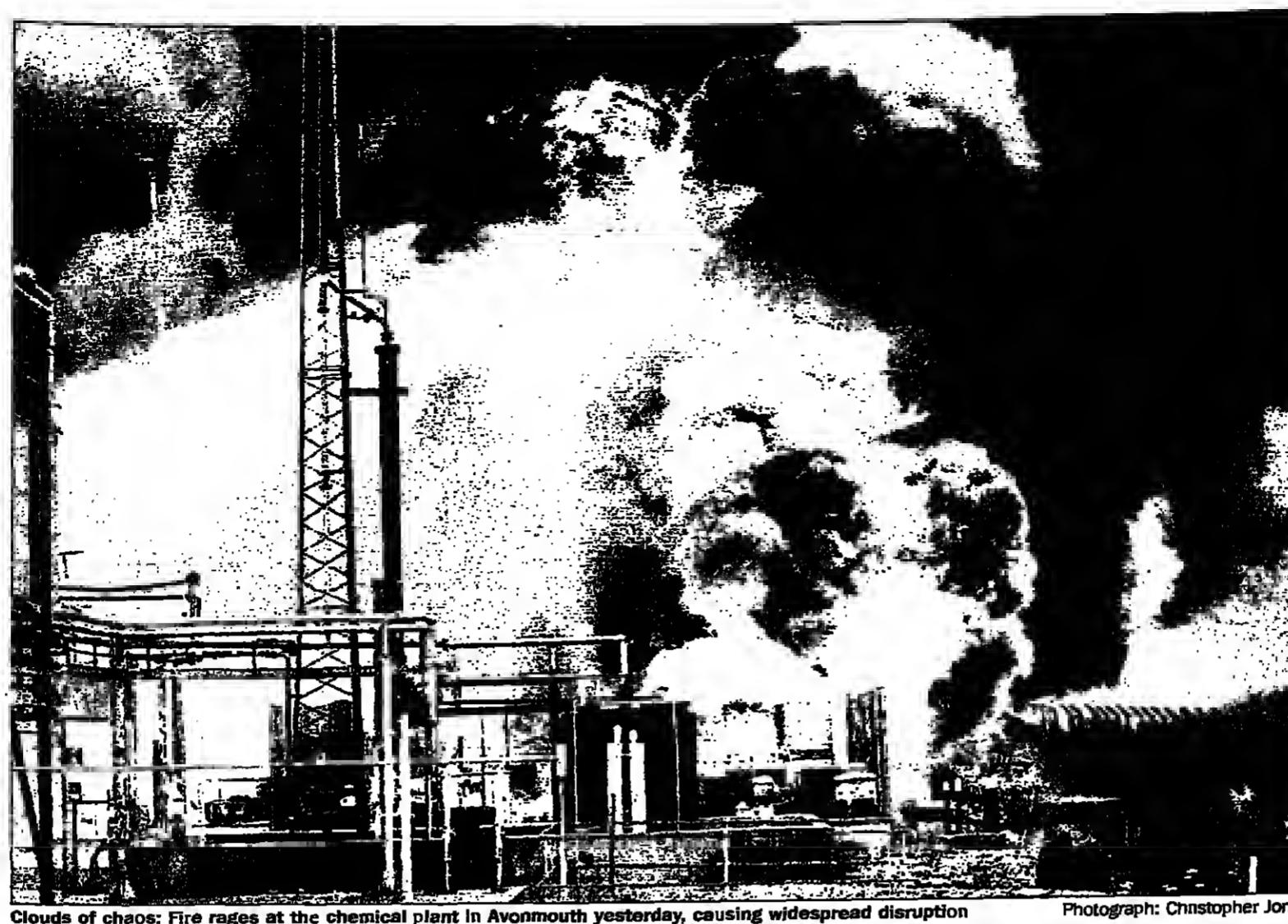
STEVE BOGGAN and NICHOLAS SCHON

Claims by environmentalists that a deadly gas widely used during the First World War was released in a huge chemical plant explosion were denied last night by the plant's owners.

Albright & Wilson insisted that a cloud released over Avonmouth and Gloucester contained no phosgene. Greenpeace had claimed that the gas had been mixed with two other chemicals during the inferno.

Both Severn estuary crossings and the M-49, M-48 and parts of the M-4 were closed yesterday as chemical fallout drifted north east from Avonmouth. Tens of thousands of householders were warned to stay indoors. Avon fire brigade later said the gas would cause only minor irritation.

The alert began at 10.30am with a large explosion at the plant. Five workers and six firefighters were taken to hospital with minor injuries. About 100 firefighters took two hours to bring the blaze under control.



Clouds of chaos: Fire rages at the chemical plant in Avonmouth yesterday, causing widespread disruption

Photograph: Christopher Jones

Murder of boy, 6, linked to occult

JOJO MOYES

The mother of Rikki Neave, the six year old boy found strangled in 1994, would often lift him up by his throat and had repeatedly threatened to kill him, a court was told yesterday.

The opening day of the trial of Ruth Neave, 38, also heard that she had a fascination with murder and the occult, used her son as a drug courier and often left him to fend for himself.

Almost two years ago the child's body was found laid in a "very distinctive" position close to his home on the Welland Estate, Peterborough.

18 hours after his mother reported him missing, James Hunt QC, for the prosecution, told the jury at Northampton Crown Court:

"He had been asphyxiated – strangled. He was killed by having his own clothing pulled up, twisted around his neck in such a way that the zipper from his anorak left its impression in his neck," Mr Hunt said.

The position of Rikki's naked body on the ground was a clear sign of involvement with black magic. The pathologist who examined the body could find no sign of sexual assault.

The trial continues today.

Major hands over all papers in libel case

PATRICIA WYNN DAVIES
Legal Affairs Editor

The parliamentary watchdog investigating the cash-for-questions allegations against the Tory MP Neil Hamilton will be given full access to all government papers in the former trade minister's abandoned libel action.

Sir Gordon Downey, the Commissioner for Parliamentary Standards, saying that it would be in the general interest for his investigation to be carried out "as swiftly as possible" and promised to make available all relevant documents. He could consider all the papers the Government provided to the court.

Sir Gordon meanwhile wrote yesterday to Mohammed al-Fayed, the Harrods' boss at the centre of the allegations, asking him to specify them and to provide supporting evidence.

The government documents at Sir Gordon's disposal will include the minute drawn up by the Cabinet Secretary, Sir Robin Butler, of a telephone conversation in which Michael Heseltine, the Deputy Prime Minister, asked Mr Hamilton whether he had a financial relationship with the parliamentary lobbyist Ian Greer, which Mr Hamilton denied.



Object of the exercise: Sir Gordon Downey, left, will have full access to official papers on the case of Neil Hamilton

Mr Hamilton admitted on Tuesday that he had received sums totalling £10,000 from Mr Greer, although he insisted they were fees for introducing the lobbyist to new business.

Mr Major's intervention came amid further allegations about the MP and his wife accepting payments in kind from Mr Greer and Harrods vouchers from Mr Fayed.

Mr Hamilton dismissed claims that he had charged payments for furniture at the Peter Jones department store in Chelsea to an account kept by Mr Greer's firm, and that Mr Greer had footed the bill for a £1,000 painting from a gallery.

The MP said: "The latest allegations in the *Guardian* I received gifts in addition to the commission payments which I have already announced, arc simply another fabrication."

Alan Rusbridger, the editor, said papers supplied by Mr Greer for the libel action "tell the true story of how Mrs Hamilton bought furniture on Mr Greer's account and how Ian Greer Associates also paid for paintings worth almost £1,000 as well as plane tickets."

Mr Fayed said yesterday that

he wrote to the chairman of the now-defunct Select Committee on Members' Interests, Sir Geoffrey Johnson Smith, on 5 December 1994, offering to give oral evidence and "laying before the committee some details of my financial dealings with Mr Greer, his company and Mr Hamilton including the payments which Mr Hamilton had asked for in cash and Harrods gift vouchers on 12 occasions between June 1987 and November 1989". The investigation was transferred to the privileges committee, before whom Mr Fayed appeared in November.

Rupert Grey, Mr Hamilton's solicitor, said of the claims concerning the Harrods vouchers: "Like all the other allegations from Mr Fayed, these are without foundation."

In the wake of disclosures that Mr Greer contributed to the election fighting funds of 24 MPs, 21 of them Tory, Conservative Party chairman Brian Mawhinney wrote to constituency chairman and agents yesterday saying that the party did not accept donations if they had "strings attached", or if there was reason to believe they included illegally obtained monies, were from foreign governments or royal families or from unknown sources.

'Investment managers kept in the dark over transfer'

Steve Boggan on the trail of £32m in shares from Mirror Group pension fund

is not known to what extent other trustees, who included Robert and Ian Maxwell, were kept informed.

However, a schedule of shareholdings was produced each month for use by officials

Asked whether he believed Kevin Maxwell ought to have informed him of the movement of the shares, he replied: "Absolutely. If they were sold, he should have passed me a copy of the sale agreement between

Mr Abrahart was not the only official kept in the dark. Inquiries by *The Independent* have established that Trevor Cook, the group pension fund manager, and Jeff Highfield, the financial controller of the group pensions department, were also not told by Mr Maxwell that he knew the shares had gone.

They still appeared on the last monthly schedule, dated 31 October 1991, a week before Robert Maxwell died, and are now the subject of litigation between Neil Cooper of Robson Rhodes, the administrator of BIM, and Banque Nationale de Paris. Lawyers for Mr Cooper are claiming the Euris shares were improperly removed from BIM and that they, or their value in cash, should be returned.

Detectives found photographs of the 19-year-old student, as well as a letter from her cousin, her toilet bag, and a camera.

But their most "grisly" finds were a heavily blood-soaked bunk and its cover, removed from Mr Morgan's lorry, and several rolls of adhesive tape, which were shown by forensic tests to match that found on Celine's wrists, it was alleged.

Kevin Maxwell has always said his actions were determined by his domineering father. During his court case, he said shares were moved around the group in complex stock-lending arrangements between all the Maxwell companies.

However, if the Euris shares had been "lent" to Headington Holdings, then collateral for them should have been put up by Headington. Mr Abrahart and other sources said they never saw any such security or value accrue to BIM, the pension fund's administrator.

Interest payments and fees should have been payable by the Maxwell companies "borrowing" the shares – usually as collateral against the loans – to BIM. *The Independent* has obtained invoices and payments made within the group stock-lending programme and Euris does not feature in any of them.

significant shorts

Pager firms to tighten security

Mobile pager companies are to meet next week to discuss urgent security measures after the revelation that hackers monitored messages sent to Labour leader Tony Blair's aides, revealing his personal movements.

Alan Wilkinson, chairman of the UK Paging Operators' Association, admitted that its members discussed in January the possibility that messages to the country's 800,000 pagers could be intercepted – but did not take any extra security measures.

"We wouldn't advise sending explicit messages which contain sensitive information," said a spokeswoman for Vodapage, which has 200,000 subscribers. BT, the largest paging company, insisted that customers would be aware that the system was not completely secure, but added that it had had no complaints from customers.

New evidence links milk to diabetes

Fresh evidence for the controversial theory that cow's milk may cause diabetes in infants is revealed today. Writing in *The Lancet*, researchers at St Bartholomew's Hospital in London say they have identified diabetes with immune cells that appear to attack a cow's milk protein, beta-casein.

Insulin-dependent diabetes develops when the body's immune system destroys the beta-cells in the pancreas that make insulin. No one knows why this auto-immune reaction happens. But the theory is that feeding an infant cow's milk can stimulate the child's immune system to react to certain milk proteins.

These milk proteins closely resemble others found on the surface of insulin-producing beta-cells. As a result, the child's immune system is tricked into attacking and eventually destroying them. *Glenda Cooper*

Duchess drops book action

The Duchess of York has dropped legal action to block publication of a controversial new book about her life, the publishers said yesterday.

The duchess took out an injunction against publication of Dr Allan Starkie's *Female, Her Secret Life*, dubbed "the book she tried to ban". Publishers Michael O'Mara Books said the duchess had backed away after being asked to lodge £500,000 with the court in case she lost the action. The book will now be published on 4 November.

Boy describes head's death

A teenage boy yesterday told the Old Bailey how he went to help mortally wounded headmaster Philip Lawrence after an old school friend of his had stabbed him in the street.

The 16-year-old described how the headmaster's body went limp after the blow and how he saw blood on Mr Lawrence's hands as he helped him back to St George's Roman Catholic School in Maidstone, northwest London. The boy said he was certain the defendant, who is charged with Mr Lawrence's murder and cannot be named for legal reasons, was the attacker.

Graffiti artist wins appeal

Graffiti vandal Simon Sunderland, who carried out an 18-month campaign of spray-painting public buildings and vehicles in South Yorkshire, was yesterday freed from a five-year jail sentence.

To loud applause and shouts of "Yes!" from Sunderland's supporters, the Court of Appeal accepted he had learned his lesson and "found a sense of purpose and direction in his art". Appeal judge Mr Justice Rougier said the sentence was "out of killer" with the offence.

Driver's 'grisly' souvenirs

Norris McWhirter, editor of the *Guinness Book of Records* from 1954 to 1986 and editorial adviser until 1996, is resigning as a director of Guinness Publishing, his last association with the world's highest-selling copyright book. Mr McWhirter, 71, founded the book with his late twin brother, Ross, 42 years ago, since when it has sold more than 80 million copies in 350 editions and 37 languages.

"I want to spend more time on other projects. I am working on two new reference books, one about inventors and inventions, the other about the 1,043 islands around Britain," he said.

THE INDEPENDENT ABROAD

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Belgium	... \$15.00	Italy	... 14,500
Canadas	... \$13.00	Malta	... £25.25
Cyprus	... £11.20	Malta	... 43 cents
Denmark	... DM18	Norway	... Nkr20
Iraq	... 450	Portugal	... E25.25
France	... Fr14	Spain	... £6.00
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READ HOW FAR WOMEN'S RIGHTS HAVE COME IN 50 YEARS. IT'S A SHORT ARTICLE.

Women have made lots of advances over the last 50 years - but not enough. In this week's Radio Times Polly Toynbee talks about the battles still to be won.

RadioTimes
IT'S NOT WHAT YOU EXPECT.

مكتبة الأزهر

The Bob and Paula show begins in tears



Helping hand: Paula Yates and her solicitor, Mark Stephens, outside the High Court yesterday

Photograph: David Rose

MICHAEL STREETER

The Bob and Paula show resumed yesterday when the former showbiz couple took the custody battle for their three children to the Family Division of the High Court.

The world's media turned out in great force to greet the pair, who divorced amicably when Ms Yates started a new relationship with pop singer Michael Hutchence.

First to arrive for the hearing in Court 45 Bob Geldof, dressed in a three-piece tweed suit and sporting a devoté scarf, who entered quickly through the back door of the Royal Courts of Justice away from most journalists.

His ex-wife, Paula Yates, 34, who recently returned from Australia to, in her words "fight for her children" faced a barrage of photographers and cameramen as she entered the courts through the main entrance.

With the photographers jockeying for the best shot, the scene rapidly descended into near chaos.

In the ensuing mêlée a camera was broken, a photographer was cut and the Yates entourage briefly walked down a dead-end into the Lions Den - the photographers' enclosure. Eventually a court policeman led Ms Yates to the court precincts.

The one-time television presenter, whose new partner is in Australia promoting his band, INXS, and by whom she has a two-month old daughter, Heavenly Hiraani, was in tears after running the media gauntlet.

Attired in a simple black dress, dark sunglasses and drop pearl earrings, she too made no comment on this latest stage in the Yate-Geldof saga.

The three-hour and 20-minute hearing, which adjourned at 4.15, was to decide who gets temporary custody of their three children, Fifi Trixie, 13, Peaches, aged six, and four-year-old Pixie, until full proceedings are heard.

Last week, 41-year-old Mr Geldof won a temporary injunction concerning the three children. That injunction followed news of an alleged drugs bust at his former wife and new partner's London residence.

The hearing continues today.



Ten years that shaped the world

Next week we'll be celebrating our tenth anniversary with a week of special features on the great events and people in news, sport, business and the arts who have shaped the world in the past decade. Britain's most innovative newspaper will also be bringing you a lively new Section Two, and a great new Saturday package.

Literature award: Polish writer of slim volumes commended for wealth of inspiration

Poetry's Mozart is Nobel winner

MARIANNE MACDONALD
Arts Correspondent

A Polish poet whose work is a closed book to most of the British literati yesterday won the \$1.12m (£750,000) Nobel Prize for Literature and found herself thrust into an unwelcome spotlight.

Wisława Szymborska, described by the judges as the Mozart of poetry, was apprehensive at the prospect of world fame when tracked down to a hotel for writers at a Polish mountain resort.

"This is a difficult situation. I am normally a very private person and now I foresee some difficult moments," Szymborska said. "I am very pleased for Polish literature although there are other poets like me in Poland."

Asked whether she would now appear more frequently in public and give lectures, the slight, grey-haired poet said she might travel but added: "No, I never give lectures."

Szymborska has written only a handful of slim volumes of poetry since 1957, and her relative obscurity in the West is partly because her work's stylistic variety makes it hard to translate.

The Swedish Academy said cryptically that it had chosen to honour Szymborska for "poetry that with ironic precision allows the historical and biological context to come to light in fragments of human reality".

It added: "She has been described as the Mozart of poetry,



Wisława Szymborska: 'I am a very private person'

'Her poems are subtle, cool: little miracles of elegant sophistication'

Our literary editor on on a dark-eyed 73-year-old with a muse to win over the world

Even by the standards of the Nobel Prize Committee, the nomination of Wisława Szymborska as this year's Literature laureate was pretty extreme. A recent spell of comparatively well-known winners, Derek Walcott, Nadine Gordimer, Seamus Heaney - lulled the book world into thinking the Stockholm prize-givers were flirting with populism. After 90-odd years of giving the world's richest and most high-prestige literary award in unknown and recondite talents (Erik Axel Karlfeldt in 1931, Baldur Laxness in 1955, not to mention the sinister Salvador Quasimodo in 1959) they suddenly seemed to be getting trendy.

So much so that, after Seamus ("Famous") Heaney's triumphant last autumn, Nobel-watchers were prepared to bet on the chances of either Bob Dylan or RS Thomas winning the prize.

The latter is a grizzled Welsh Jesuit priest, who has been hotly tipped as Nobel material

son and "found a sense of purpose and direction in his art". Mr Justice Rougier said the five-year sentence was "out of character" and more appropriate to an offence of street mugging. The judges substituted a two-year sentence, which taking into account time on remand, means he will be freed in a few days.

Sunderland - whose trademark was a clenched fist and the flame Fisto - was given the "deterrent" sentence at Sheffield Crown Court in March after admitting criminal damage.

Graffiti vandal has jail sentence cut

A graffiti vandal who carried out an 18-month spray-painting campaign was granted his freedom yesterday from a five-year jail sentence.

The Court of Appeal accepted that Simon Sunderland, of Sheffield, had learnt his les-

In Praise of Feeling Bad About Yourself

by Wisława Szymborska

The buzzard never says it is to blame. The panther wouldn't know what scruples mean. When the piranha strikes, it feels no shame. If snakes had hands, they'd claim their hands were clean. A jackal doesn't understand remorse. Lions and leopards don't waver in their course. Why should they, when they know they're right? Though hearts of killer whales may weigh a ton, in every other way they're light. On this third planet of the sun, among the signs of bestiality. A clear conscience is Number One

Translation by Stanisław Baranszak and Clare Cavanagh

Still
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Think again.

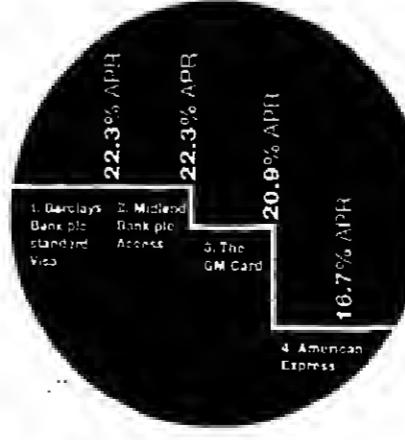
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David M. Walsh

Page 4

Law and order: Mother asks for total ban on handguns, while Straw highlights drug-related crime

Tears flow at Dunblane plea

ANTHONY BEVINS
Political Editor

Delegates wept at the Labour Party conference yesterday as they listened to an impassioned plea for a ban on all handguns to prevent a repeat of the Dunblane massacre.

In a moving speech that opened and ended with standing ovations, Ann Pearson, organiser of the Dunblane Snowdrop Campaign, said there could be no compromise.

"Yesterday was a little girl's sixth birthday. She got cards and flowers, but she wasn't there to blow the candles out on her cake."

"She was Sophie North. Compromise cost her her life."

Urging Labour to take one little step further from its current policy – banning private ownership and possession of handguns, but leaving open the possibility of keeping them in gun clubs – Ms Pearson called for a total ban.

"Ban them from homes," she said. "Ban them from gun clubs. Ban them from our society."

When Thomas Hamilton had gone into the Dunblane primary school, he had had 743 rounds of ammunition; enough to kill

every pupil and teacher, she said.

"His ear muffs served a dual purpose: to lessen the noise of gun shot, but also to block out a noise he would not have been used to on the target range: the scream of terrified infants."

"He fired at the children and the teachers as if at targets – some of which received seven bullets – some fired at point-blank range, down into them where they lay injured."

"He fired at injured children as they tried to crawl away – again and again and again. Three minutes, nine pistol, 105 bullets fired, 17 dead, 14 injured and one child who stood and watched it all. An entire community cut down emotionally."

"Those who survived were conscious throughout. On 13th March, Hamilton inflicted on the innocent people of Dunblane, 17 death sentences and multiple life sentences. There will be no reprieve, no parole for good behaviour, no right of appeal against his decision."

Labour said last night that it had left the door open to a ban on handguns being kept in clubs, pending the findings of Lord Cullen's report into the Dunblane massacre. But Ms Pearson said: "Leave handguns in clubs and a planner like Hamilton will just book them out for a competition, or put them in his pocket and walk out. We must shut the door on public safety tight – so that it can't be pushed wider by the very powerful gun lobby in years to come."

The vicious circle of drugs-related crime, in which property worth more than £1bn is stolen to finance the habit, will be tackled by a Labour government, the shadow Home Secretary, Jack Straw, promised.

"Once, crime happened to someone else," Mr Straw said. "Today, it happens to us all. Recorded crime has doubled in the last 7 years. Today, there'll be 50,000 crimes committed; that's one crime every two seconds."

However, he said that there were fewer greater challenges to law and order than drugs-related crime. With addicts thieving daily to fund their drug-taking – "at a cost of well over £1bn in property stolen by them each year" – Mr Straw said that Labour would introduce a pilot project to force drug-addicted offenders to undergo treatment.



Impassioned plea: Ann Pearson calling for a total ban on handguns. Photograph: Reuters

Payback time as Jack turns on tormentors



DAVID AARONOVITCH

Tory home secretaries used to be unpopular with their conferences for refusing to heed calls for hanging, flogging and castrating. Jack Straw has successfully inverted this tradition, making Labour delegates uncomfortable by enthusiastically supporting toughness.

These days, he told conference "crime happens to us all".

But once, it "happened to someone else". I know what he means. In Edwardian times, marauding gangs of British boys did not rush around county towns smashing things and beating up black people. They went to Africa to do that.

Jack looks like the bright guy with glasses who was pushed around at school. Bullies threw his cap in the canal, flicked ink pellets at him, and scrawled in his meticulous exercise books. And now, 35 years later,

it's payback time.

First to go will be the nasty neighbours, sorted out, evicted and replaced by families called Straw and Blair, who will organise Neighbourhood Watch, water your patio plants when you go away, and tap on the window if you put your rubbish on the wrong day.

Thugs are in trouble too. No more endless cautions from over-worked constables. Instead there will be one Final Warning. This sounds appropriately ominous, and in the absence of any detail I imagine that after a Final Warning has been transgressed, bounty hunters and neighbourhood posses will be allowed to hunt offenders down and treat them to summary justice.

It sounds great. As an invento-wannabe myself I endorse all this. I have a quibble with Jack about his drugs policy, which he announced yesterday, and which is about getting tough on addicts who commit crime.

My quibble is that this is destined to no greater success than

all the other failed measures in the great Prohibition against illegal drugs. And such strictures also seem a hit rich at a conference where vast quantities of alcohol have been consumed. In fact, so much has been drunk that when Michael Meacher referred this week to a "clamp down on [exhaust] belching monsters", a large number of hung-over delegates looked rather sheepish.

Mr Straw also said this: "Our promise to the British people is to create a society where old people are not terrified when they answer the door." Really? And how will Labour control these feelings of terror? Jack, I say this to you, governments do not create societies. People create societies. That's why the drugs policy will not work.

And that's also why there was so much nervousness at the heart of the discussions about devolution yesterday. Why should there be all this worry about a tax-raising parliament? After Bramhall, are they afraid of Scottish voters saying: "I dinnae being hung, wi' ma insides cut out and burned in front o' my face, but I'm no paying another penny tax the taxman?"

Apparently any suggestion that there might be higher taxes in Scotland will cause a "Bathgate today, Bath tomorrow" reaction.

But this is a fig-leaf to cover Scots nakedness. Everybody in Middle England that I've ever met wishes them and their parliament well, just so long as they shut up about it.

Short helps defeat vote on Trident

Labour's rejection of unilateral nuclear disarmament was confirmed yesterday when Clare Short helped the party leadership defeat a last attempt before the election by CND supporters to commit Labour to scrapping the Trident nuclear weapon system, writes Colin Brown.

Calling on the conference to reject the move, Ms Short dismissed claims that £2bn could be diverted to schools and hospitals, and said most of the money would have been spent. "There are no savings to be made by scrapping Trident. Under our policy, we use our weapons to get rid of more weapons. This must be a better way to use our influence," she said.

The move to scrap Trident was supported by the Campaign Group of Labour MPs, and a number of constituents. Chris Parnell, of Orpington, south London, said scrapping Trident would set an example to the other nuclear powers and encourage them to do away with their own weapons. Supporting

him, Len Easton, of Peterborough Constituency Labour Party, asked: "Who is the enemy we are defending ourselves from?"

Trade unions, dockyard constituencies worried about the loss of jobs, and Labour's front bench, led by Ms Short and David Clark, the defence spokesman, united in defeating the unilateralist motion by 56.35 per cent to 43.65 per cent in a card vote.

Tony Blair's grip on the party was reinforced as the constituents voted 22.7 per cent for unilateralism, compared with 27.2 per cent against. The unions voted 20 per cent for, and 29 per cent against.

But Ms Short, spokeswoman for overseas development, also made a veiled attack on modernisers such as Kim Howells for suggesting the word "socialist" should be disposed of. "How can anyone suggest socialism is no longer relevant when one-quarter of the world lives in abject poverty and the number is growing as the world gets richer?" she asked.

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Tory peers warned on Scots rule

STEPHEN GOODWIN

The Conservatives were warned yesterday not to use their majority in the House of Lords to obstruct a Labour government's plans for a Scottish parliament.

Burying some of the party's recent disarray over home rule with a forceful speech in the democracy reform debate, George Robertson, the shadow Scottish secretary, said Labour meant business.

"We will finish John Smith's unfinished business and legislate for a Scottish parliament in

the first year of a Labour government," he promised.

The single referendum which Labour has settled on to precede a devolution Bill could bring an early clash between a Tony Blair administration and the Lords, which Labour is pledged to reform.

Mr Robertson noted that John Major had already threatened to use the Lords to obstruct a one-clause referendum Bill. "The very fact that they are forced to wield the blunt broadsword of the backwoods battalions of the dukes, earls

and viscounts shows that they have lost the democratic argument and they know it," he said.

In a challenge which drew the loudest applause of the debate, Mr Robertson warned: "If they use the power of the peers we will use the power of the people and the people's will will prevail."

The Parliament Act of 1911 gives the Commons power to overrule the Lords after only a matter of months. But Mr Blair is also committed to removing the right of hereditary peers to vote - a reform which

could be hastened if the referendum Bill was put at risk.

There is a growing belief in Westminster that a "Yes" vote in the referendum would be used as justification for gutting the main devolution Bill through the Commons. Constitutional measures are not normally subject to time-tabling, giving an opposition and rebels ample scope for delaying tactics.

Mr Robertson rounded on SNP members who had vilified him at their conference in Inverness last week. They had displayed the darker side

to nationalism. "What we saw there was raw chauvinism," he said. "Chauvinism at its worst - ugly, intolerant, nasty - and it should have no place in Scottish politics or in any decent society."

The conference endorsed plans for a Welsh assembly and a two-stage strategy for regional government in England. Regional chambers based on local authorities would be set up followed by directly elected regional governments where there was a demand for it.

Such super-councils would not have powers to tax or legislate but would run many of the currently unelected regional departments. Labour believes the change would make bidding for funding from Europe easier.

The goal of youth goes straight past Blair

Tony Blair left the conference platform yesterday lunchtime and joined Alex Ferguson to play football with pupils at Devonshire Primary School, Blackpool, writes John Rentoul.

Wearing a sports jacket in the colours of his local Newcastle United team, Mr Blair teamed up with the manager of rivals Manchester United in goal, while a team of 10- and 11-year-olds showed no mercy in blasting penalties past them.

The Labour leader was unable to match his 26 consecutive headers in a similar photo-opportunity with Kevin Keegan, Newcastle manager, during last year's conference.

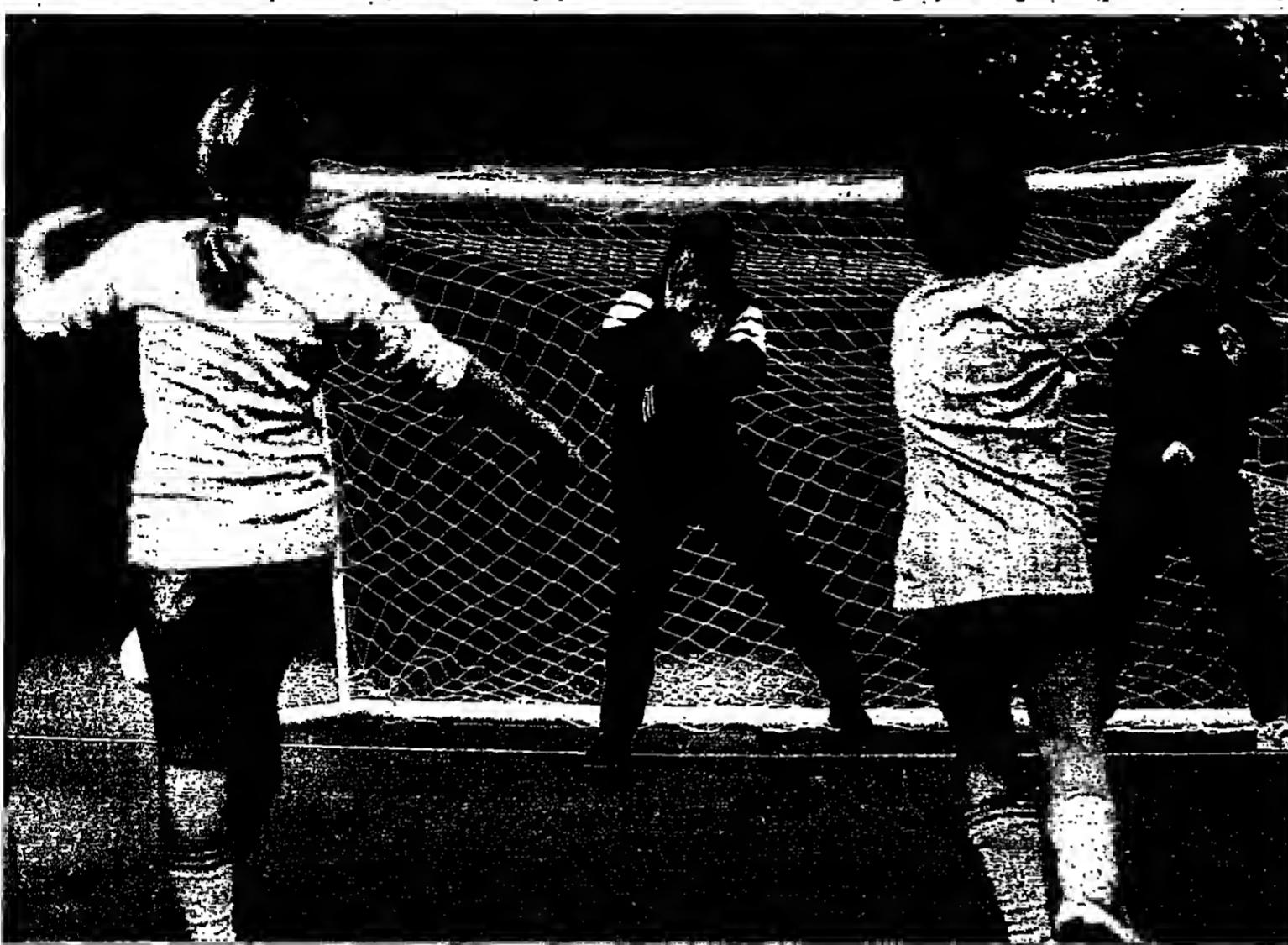
The girls, champions of the local league, were practising for their first match of the season.

"It's probably better fun than sitting in the conference hall," Mr Blair said, nursing bruised fingers.

Mr Ferguson, long a Labour supporter and a member of the party's 1,000 Club whose members give £1,000 to its funds, praised the party's plans to encourage sport.

It was an event designed to present Mr Blair as in touch with the aspirations of youth, which on this occasion were mainly to get Mr Ferguson's autograph.

It was his second photo-call of the day, after meeting soldiers of the Queen's Lancashire Reg-



The firing line: The children putting them past Tony Blair and Alex Ferguson yesterday

plans for a Welsh assembly and a two-stage strategy for regional government in England. Regional chambers based on local authorities would be set up followed by directly elected regional governments where there was a demand for it.

Such super-councils would not have powers to tax or legislate but would run many of the currently unelected regional departments. Labour believes the change would make bidding for funding from Europe easier.

MAIN ANNOUNCEMENTS

Self-governance for Wales and Scotland, a ban on under-18s holding skydiving and golf

Random drug testing for ex-offenders who are former criminals

Reformulation of the electoral system

QUOTES OF THE DAY

"We must now live like Ann Pearson, organiser of the Showbread rebellion, in our homes, of Sophie North, killed in Dungiven, who would have been six this week."

"I really respect Mr Pinder... I fought against Franco and all that. We just live on I can't stand..." Rodney McVae, leader of Ulster

"I don't think I have made any financial commitments, have I?" Robin Cook, when a journalist's blazer went off in the middle of his hinge speech

Labour's Coming Home: Please Note Change of Address: *Inside Headline*

"I am this to the Tories: If you don't want the election, don't call the election," Jack Straw

"A soldier who comes out of the military, would like to have a job, doesn't necessarily have a job," Alan Dobbie, Hornsey and Wood Green

GOOD DAY... BAD DAY DEVIL OF THE DAY

Alex Ferguson
Man Utd manager
"I'm not worried about the future of Schmeichel, none of whom recognise him more than Tony Blair"

Peter Mitchens
Daily Express
Editorial writer
"I'm not so sure to write that he went home early"

Michael Howard
Home Secretary
"I've attacked my party for its inaction"

THE CROWD-PULLERS ON THE FRINGE

Culpepper Movement with Robbie Cook, GM Brunton, Peter Seal, Economics and Euro MP's leader Wayne David; 300 people

Alex Ferguson, Man Utd manager, on the future of football: 100+ in a tiny room at the Clifton hotel

PRINTING ERROR OF THE DAY

Conservative Union condemned the "assassination of Iranian agents abroad". Did they mean "assassination"?

THE PARTY TO BE SEEN AT

London and Continental Business, Imperial Hotel, free champagne at last

SIGHTINGS

Jeremy Irons, actor

David Trimble, chairman designate of SDLP, MP

Peter Bonfield, chief executive of BT

RAPTUREMETER

Tony Blair (home affairs) 34 sec 91 decibels

George Robertson (Scotland) 34 sec 91 decibels

Clark Short (oversized) 22 sec 89 decibels

TODAY'S BUSINESS

Votes on police-making and role of conference deputy leader's speech

Compiled by John Rentoul

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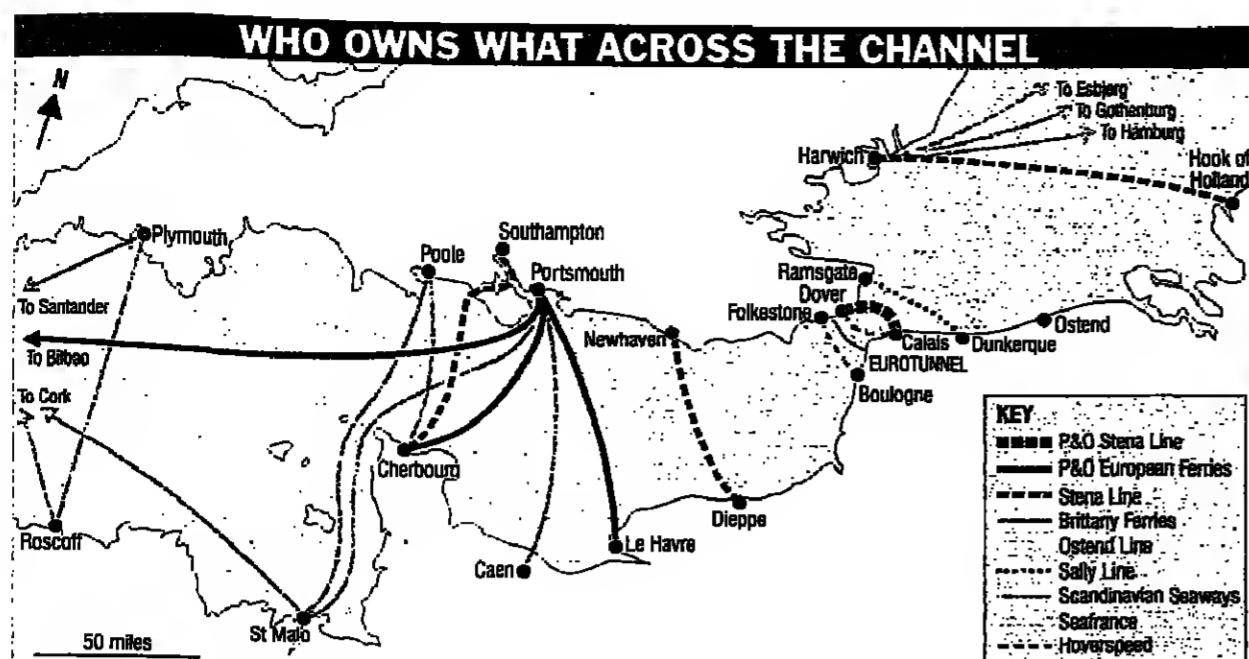


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Ferry merger may scuttle low fares

This summer's bonanza of cheap fares for motorists crossing the Channel is unlikely to be repeated next year following yesterday's announcement that the two main ferry operators, P&O and Stena are to merge their Dover-Calais and other short sea crossing routes.

The two companies have signed a deal, expected to be finalised next month, which would result in a merger of their short sea cross Channel routes, resulting in at least 1,000 job losses. While a few smaller competitors such as Sea France and HoverSpeed will remain, the merger will give the new operation around 40 per cent of the market, the same as the Channel Tunnel and will give the two effective control over pricing policies.

The merger will bring to an end the seemingly inexplicable growth of capacity on the route since the tunnel started operating nearly two years ago with extra ships having been brought in for both the past two summers. Now, the Stena Line ship Invicta and P&O's Pride of Bruges, both operating on the Dover-Calais route, will be taken out of service at the end of the year with the immediate loss of 400 jobs.

While neither company was losing money on the route.

At least 1,000 jobs lost as P&O and Stena join forces **Christian Wolmar** reports

Their profits had dipped dramatically in the past two years. Consequently P&O and Stena have been trying to rationalise their services for years but until this summer the Government had refused to sanction any co-operation in their arrangements because of the desire to retain strong competition on the route. Various options such as joint ticketing had been discussed, but both companies favoured a full merged operation.

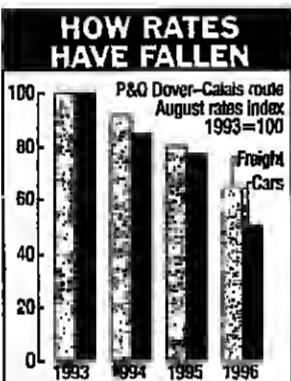
The new P&O Stena Line,

pricing policy remaining. The service is still profitable, though our profits have fallen."

However, with fares for motorists having been cut by half in the past couple of years, it is unlikely that they will remain so low. In May last year, Eurotunnel launched a full scale price war when it cut the fare for its main peak summer services from £266 to £129 and the ferries were forced to respond.

Indeed Eurotunnel, which announced on Wednesday that it had thrashed out a refinanc-

which will be 60 per cent owned by P&O and 40 per cent by Stena, will operate 14 ships on the Dover-Calais, Newhaven-Dieppe and other short sea routes. Graham Dunlop, chairman of P&O European Ferries, said: "We will be operating at least a ship every 45 minutes and possibly every half hour." He said steps that the merger would not necessarily lead to an increase in prices: "There is still powerful competition from the Tunnel which brought huge extra capacity. All our projections are on the basis of the current



ing deal on the debt ridden Channel Tunnel project, welcomed the deal.

John Noulton, Eurotunnel's spokesman confirmed that the days of bargain summer cross Channel trips may be over: "We support this. It will mean a more orderly market and will make for firmer prices. All the companies suffered under the price war, which may now end."

Lord Sterling, the chairman of P&O said: "There will be job losses and to suggest otherwise would be nonsense." He said that estimates of 1,000 job losses were unlikely to be too high. "But doing nothing would mean they would have a bleak future. This means that those who will be part of the party will have an exciting future."

The company would set up a unit to offer advice on retraining, on top of redundancy arrangements which would "err on the generous side", he said.

P&O was also in talks with other operators including Brittany Ferries, the French company which operates on the western Channel from Portsmouth and Plymouth to France and Spain. "We have spent a great deal of time seeing how we might have rationalisation but they operate to a different timetable," Lord Sterling said.



Ressurection: Missoni's spring/summer '97 collection won applause with its cocktails of colours inspired by sunsets, rainforests and the sea

TAMSIN BLANCHARD

Milan

Prettiness and femininity are the buzz words in Milan this week at the collections for spring/summer 1997. The strict minimal lines of the past few seasons have been interrupted by soft frills, floral prints, transparent billowing chiffon and necklines that drape softly.

Yesterdays at Missoni, the luxury knitwear label that recently celebrated 40 years in business, the label proved that it has resurrected itself from the dull and frosty.

from the dull and rusty
with one of the best shows
in Milan all week.

The fact that one-quarter of the audience was wearing pieces of Missoni, from a stripy knit scarf to the full-blown dress of the editor of French *Vogue*, is a sure sign that the label is hip again. The store has reached the top three of the fashion crowd's shopping destinations along with Gucci who showed last night, and Prada.

last night, and Prada. Missoni's shop assistants have been surprised by an unexpected surge of models and fashion press who have been stopping off to buy a simple patterned tunic or an heirloom scarf.

In Milan, some things do not change each season at the whim of fashion. Missoni has been working along the same lines for almost half a century. And one of the world's fashion giants, Giorgio Armani, who declared earlier this month that fashion is dead, showed his Emporio Armani line with classic tailoring and sporty separates, while MaxMara presented a collection of elegant classics that ranged from beautifully tailored pure white fluid trouser suits to basic essentials in lightweight denim.

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Middle Left: Dulux Kitchens & Bathrooms Paint
Choice of colours
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Middle Center: Dulux Kitchen & Bathroom Paint
£6.99

Middle Right: Dulux Brilliant White Emulsion
Matt, Silk or Soft Sheen
5 litres
£11.99 Save £2

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£29.99 Save £5

Bottom Center: Bosch Sander PDA 100
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MARGIN BLANCHARD

Tate wins £5m watercolour collection in Lottery bonanza

DAVID LISTER

The Tate Gallery has acquired a £5m watercolour collection, deemed to be one of the most significant collections of British watercolours and drawings to have remained in private hands.

The collection contains around 3,000 works and was put together by Paul Oppé, a distinguished scholar and collector, during the first half of this century. Its greatest strength is in late 18th-century landscape watercolours and drawings, which reflect the "Golden Age" of British watercolours.

Many are views of Italy and Switzerland produced in the era of the "grand tour" by artists including Richard Wilson, Francis Towne, JR Cozens and John "Warwick" Smith.

The Tate will show 100 works from the collection in September 1997 and plans eventually to increase the opening hours of its Study Room to five days a week to make the collection accessible to the public.

Nicholas Serota, director of the Tate, said yesterday: "There has never been anything on the scale of this acquisition. In



Nicholas Serota, director of the Tate Gallery, examines some of the new acquisitions. They include (from left): Self-Portrait (1964) by Andy Warhol; Death Giving George Taylor a Cross-Buttock by William Hogarth (1697-1764); The Source of the Averon (1783) by Francis Towne and a detail from Salta nel mio Sacco (1984) by Frank Stella.

terms of size, the Oppé Collection consists of 3,000 works, which is unparalleled.

"It has been made possible only by the existence of Lottery funds. This is precisely the kind of collection which, had it come

on to the market five years ago, would have been broken up and sold in separate pieces.

"We have acquired a group of works for the nation for a very good figure. It is money well spent."

Parts of the collection will go on display in four venues around Britain in the next few years, including Cambridge, Edinburgh and Cardiff.

Paul Oppé died in 1957 and his world-famous collection of

watercolours, drawings, oil sketches and prints has been held privately until now.

Its acquisition was arranged through a special agreement negotiated through Sotheby's, and was made possible with a

Heritage Lottery Fund grant of £3,776,000 and £100,000 from the National Art Collections Fund. A further lottery grant of £250,000 will support the collection's conservation, cataloguing and the cost of mount-

ing temporary exhibitions of highlights of the collection around the UK.

The Tate's director, Nicholas Serota, who announced a gift by Janet Wolfson de Botton of 50 works by contemporary Euro-

pian and American artists, including Andy Warhol's 1986 *Self-Portrait* and Gilbert and George's *Red Morning Troubles*.

The Tate has galleries in London, Liverpool and St Ives, Cornwall.

Ireland 'is too easy on its writers'

CLARE GARNER

Frankfurt

The Irish author of a new biography of Samuel Beckett said last night it was too easy to get published in Ireland, arguing that state subsidy and patronage was too generous.

Anthony Cronin, whose biography of Beckett has just been published, sounded a note at variance with the theme of the Frankfurt Book Fair, "Ireland and its Diaspora", and the address by Irish president, Mary Robinson.

The Irish participation at the fair has more than doubled this year. The country where writing is occasionally called "the national affliction" was selected as the fair's focal theme and this encouraged 35 of the 60 publishing houses active in Ireland to attend, many of them for the first time.

Last night the poet, fiction writer, critic and biographer Anthony Cronin, told *the Independent* there were three reasons why people were leaving Ireland: "Sunlight, booze and sex".

"You may think that in Ireland we have more booze than we know what to do with, but it's not true. Nice drinks in sunlight are different from nice drinks in a poky pub," he said.

"Sunlight still is a big draw."

I suppose sex and booze are more available at home, but the combination of all three in a Mediterranean climate is a good thing."

In her opening speech, the Irish President Mary Robinson made a special plea for writers. "I think we should remember that the individual writer is the source and the focus here, and that the writer's life and experience is not easy, is still not secure, and still needs to be honoured and rewarded if we are to be certain of treasuring the energies and self-knowledge in our midst."

The book as an object, as a commercial venture, as a cultural opportunity loses all its resonance and meaning if we forget that," she said. The difficulty is, of course, that the world of publishing may seem to be infinitely convivial and public and festive.

"But the life of the writer is solitary and easily overlooked: we need to be careful not to make the first a distraction from the second."

But Mr Cronin, 68, begged to differ. "Maybe it's a bit too easy to be an Irish writer now," he said. "People now regard writing and artistic creation generally with a sort of approval which was certainly absent when I was growing up - and it's very easy to be published."

John Grisham has a new novel out: *The Partner*. But there are rumours here that a new Grisham is waiting in the wings. The literary agent Darley Anderson is working hard to shape the career of "the Grisham of medical thrillers". Mr Anderson challenged Paul Carson, a 46-year-old Dublin doctor specialising in childhood asthma and allergy, to write a medical thriller. Mr Carson subsequently wrote *Scalpel* and Mr Anderson is now selling the rights. Louise Moon of Heinemann won the UK and Commonwealth rights for £44,000.

It's a must-have for anyone mystified by what young people today are most interested in. "Son of Disco", Alan Shulman's *Style Bible* warns: "No longer a counter-culture

movement, today's youth culture is now the movement... their style becomes everyone's style to one degree or another". His book, to be published by Methuen next autumn contains 1,000 definitions, from hip-hop to posh toffy.

They have been round the world and now they are getting into rock. The Rough Guide to Rock is an up-to-date and positive guide to 1,056 bands. "It's not written by your average music hack who's been there, done that," said Richard Trillo, associate director.

CLARE GARNER

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international

Europe: Momentum is building for monetary union in 1999, but political integration will be postponed until next century.

Kohl submits to delay on integration

SARAH HELM
Brussels

Helmut Kohl, the German Chancellor, has admitted publicly for the first time that Europe may have to postpone its drive for further integration until after the single currency.

Speaking before tomorrow's European summit in Dublin, Mr Kohl said that if the talks on reforming the Maastricht treaty - known as "Maastricht 2" make little progress, there would have to be a "Maastricht 3" conference at a later date.

Until now Mr Kohl has always stated that he believes further European political union must go hand in hand with monetary union. However, his latest remarks suggest he now accepts that Europe does not have the stomach for the upheaval of both monetary union and further political union at the same time.

Indications that Mr Kohl, the leading integrationist, is toning down his ambitions for immediate reform of the European Union will be welcomed by John Major, who has argued for a limited agenda from the start.

Among the most far-reaching questions of reform probably to be delayed to Maastricht 3 - which would start well after the next general election - would be an increase in majority voting, one of the most contentious issues for the Tory government. Mr Major will join his European partners in Dublin tomorrow when the reform timetable will have to be on the agenda.

In another sign of lowering expectations, there has been growing support within the EU

for postponing the conclusion of the current round of the Inter-Governmental Conference (IGC) until the end of Luxembourg's presidency in December 1997. It had been widely anticipated that the conclusion would take place under the Dutch presidency in Amsterdam in June 1997. France, in particular, has been hinting that Europe should reduce its ambitions for the IGC and set-

Mr Kohl's comments come as little surprise to those who have been closely involved in the present round of IGC discussions. For several months diplomats have been commenting on the deep malaise which surrounds the talks, which have become little more than a "paper chase". "Texts have been produced on every issue you can think of. But there is no political impetus to think big," one EU official said.

The idea of the current IGC, launched amid great fanfare in Turin in March, was to re-write the 1991 Maastricht treaty in order to modernise and refine the EU's institutions to produce more integration and more efficiency in preparation for the accession of new member states from Eastern Europe early in the next millennium.

However, the IGC negotiators have been hampered by a lack of political impetus from their leaders. Not only in Britain, but in several other member states, public opinion has signalled growing disquiet with the speed of integration.

It is widely acknowledged that major reform will probably not happen until the enlargement of the union is a reality. "When those countries are really knocking on the door, then the political will to make the reforms might be there," an EU diplomat said yesterday.

At the same time, it is accepted in many capitals that the task of seeing through the change to a single currency, due to be launched in 1999, will be so overwhelming that other forms of political reform will have to be limited.



John Major: Will welcome more limited agenda

Chancellor Helmut Kohl: Toning down his ambitions for immediate political reform. Photograph: Hermann Knippertz

Prodi fights for Italy's credibility

ANDREW GUMBEL
Rome

Will Romano Prodi go down in history as the prime minister who catapulted Italy into European monetary union in record time, or the man who messed it all up?

With his governing coalition growing restive, parliament sharpening its knives to debate his tax-ridden budget proposals, and Jacques Chirac arriving for a highly uncomfortable bilateral summit, the Italian premier was battling yesterday not only to preserve his country's credibility, but also his own.

Mr Prodi has been at the eye of a pan-European storm ever since he decided last week to ditch Italy's carefully laid public finance plans in favour of an austerity budget that he promised would be enough to qualify Italy for the single European currency from the word go.

First, Mr Prodi himself admitted that it would take as much luck as judgement for the budget to bring the country's public finances even remotely into line with the Maastricht criteria. Then Mr Chirac rubbed salt into the wounds by stating flatly that Italy would not be in the initial line-up - a remark which sparked such a diplomatic storm that he was later forced to retract it, but one which will surely heighten the tension in Naples this morning when he meets Mr Prodi to discuss the next stage of European integration.

In the past few days, some of Mr Prodi's own political supporters have been belittling his initiative as "clumsy", "amateur", and "haphazard". The right wing of his Olive Tree coalition has balked at his high tax proposals and at his refusal, prompted by the far-left on whose votes he depends in parliament, to cut into pensions and health care charges.

Meanwhile Massimo D'Alema, the leader of the left-wing PDS and Mr Prodi's most important political sponsor, has publicly criticised the budget's high housing-tax provisions, and urged them to be revised.

US worries over effect on dollar as euro gathers reality

DIANE COYLE
Economics Editor

The past week has brought the clearest possible signal that the single European currency will be born in 1999: the Americans are finally becoming interested in it.

From cocktail party chat at the annual meeting of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) taking place this week to the formal meeting of the Group of Seven finance ministers last weekend, Emu has been a sur-

prisingly common subject of conversation in Washington.

Kenneth Clarke, Britain's Chancellor, reported: "This has become a live issue." He added: "The Americans have reached the conclusion that Emu is likely to go ahead. They therefore wish to contemplate what preparations they must make."

One US official described as "loopy" the German insistence that cutting budget deficits would actually increase output thanks to lower long-term interest rates set by the financial markets.

European governments tightening their belts in order to get budget deficits below the Maastricht ceiling next year, the US thinks the level of interest rates on the Continent should be lower to compensate. "It is very important to the US that Europe grows," Mr Rubin said.

But the short-term outlook has not been the only preoccupation of the round of meetings. The US has also started to turn its mind to the broader implications of Europe's move to a single currency.

from the Germans, however. By the end of the G7 meeting Mr Rubin was stressing the need for "credible programs to reduce fiscal deficits". Ministers also highlighted the need for continued structural reform in other words, deregulation of labour and industry.

The thought uppermost in the mind of US administration officials was voiced by Wim Duisenberg, governor of the Dutch central bank, attending the IMF annual meeting. "There will be three players on the field of virtually equal strength," he said. This should not have come as a huge surprise to anybody. After all, the size of the market encompassed by a single currency has always been presented as one of the key economic benefits.

The Americans are beginning to fret about what it will mean for the chronically weak dollar when the Euro comes into existence, especially if the Euro behaves a lot like the German mark. The dollar's role as a world reserve currency could diminish further.

Another implication much discussed by officials in Washington was that the creation of the European Central Bank would be matched faster than anybody has been anticipating by a single European view on fiscal policy. Many now expect that fin-

ance ministers in the Euro area will have to form a collective view leading to a very rapid integration of fiscal policy.

For small countries such as the Netherlands, this is an attractive avenue to greater influence on the world economic stage. For Italy and Britain, numbers five and six in the G7, it points to the shrinkage of their influence in the longer term. It also indicates the scale of the potential cost to the United Kingdom of staying out, and to Italy of failing to qualify.

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Union leaves Germans divided

IMRE KARACS
Bonn

The two nations of Germany commemorated their union yesterday in sombre mood. Six years after the German Democratic Republic was subsumed into the Federal Republic, east and west are united only by a sense of gloom, amid a growing realisation that parity is still more than a decade away.

The fading dream of forging one people has been replaced by bitterness on both sides. The Wessies - seen in the "Zone" as arrogant and intolerant products of the "elbow society" - resent the high price-tag attached to the project. Some 750m marks (£326m) have been sunk into eastern Germany so far, but the investment has produced little dividend.

As for the human dimension, the two peoples have less to do with one another than Bosnia's disparate ethnic groups. A recent survey has revealed that a West Berliner is five times more likely to marry a foreigner than someone from the other side of the invisible Wall. Nearly four-fifths of eastern Germans regard themselves as second-class citizens in their own country.

Perceptions about the amount of cash the Ossies deserve and the gratitude they are expected to display in return lie at the heart of the enmity between the two communities. Western tax payers are painfully aware of the 7.5 per cent lopped off their earnings every month to pay for a perceived eastern profligacy. The burden of reconstruction has already brought the economy in the west to a standstill.

The sense of pessimism has, however, masked the progress. Six years ago the GDR was a country with full employment but empty shops and no prospects. Now the service sector is better than its western equivalent, and productivity in eastern factories often outstrips that of the parent company on the other side.

What eastern Germany has been experiencing might well have been described as "an economic miracle". That it is out, owes a great deal to possibly the only view Ossies and Wessies have in common: that East Germans are a nation of losers.

Middle East: Threat of renewed Palestinian violence as leaders return home

Israel the summit victor

PATRICK COCKBURN
Jerusalem

For once Israelis and Palestinians are agreed. Israel believes that from its point of view the Washington summit was a success and Palestinians say that for them it was not. "We got nothing," said Ghassan Khatib, a Palestinian commentator. "The summit was a complete failure."

In two days of talks with President Bill Clinton and Yasir Arafat, the Palestinian leader, Benjamin Netanyahu, the Israeli Prime Minister gave no date for the partial withdrawal of Israeli troops from Hebron and refused to close the tunnel under the old city of Jerusalem which sparked off the fighting in which 15 Israelis and 59 Palestinians died.

From next Sunday there are to be continuous negotiations between Israel and the Palestinians over redeployment in Hebron and security issues. President Clinton is to lend the services of his Middle-East coordinator, Dennis Ross, for the talks at the Erez checkpoint near Gaza.

The Palestinians seem perilously close to renegotiating the agreement of Hebron, signed a year ago, which is exactly what they did not want to do. The only small gain for the Palestinians is a general target date for redeployment in Hebron which was reportedly given by Mr Netanyahu to Mr Clinton.

Mr Khatib believes Mr Arafat would have been in a stronger position if he had refused to go to the summit "unless he received concrete assurances that he would get something". He would not have been alone in refusing to go because

President Mubarak, the Americans' principal Arab ally in the Middle East, had turned down an invitation to Washington because Israel was offering nothing.

There was little visible reaction to the summit on the West Bank or in Gaza. The Israeli army has sealed off all towns and villages from each other.

At Halhoul, east Hebron, which has been placed under curfew, a 14-year-old boy was shot dead and two other teenagers were wounded by Israeli soldiers when they threw stones at a military vehicle.

Although the Palestinians



A Palestinian scuffles with an Israeli soldier trying to arrest his son after clashes in Hebron yesterday. Photograph: AP

got nothing in Washington, their overall position is stronger than before the demonstrations and killings last week. They are more united, the credibility of the Palestine Authority has increased and they have won international support. But critics of Mr Arafat say Palestinians are getting fed up with him attending international summits which do no good. Khalid Anis, a

journalist in Hebron, said: "We are sick of these futile symbols."

The summit showed that President Clinton is prepared to protect Mr Arafat personally, but not to pressure Israel into making concessions. A month ago the White House had reportedly told Mr Netanyahu that he would not meet the President unless he first met Mr Arafat. Professor Israel Shahak,

a radical critic of Mr Arafat, said: "Arafat is becoming like many Third World leaders, an instrument through which the international community maintains stability."

There is little likelihood, at least in the immediate future, that Mr Arafat will face serious criticism from the 2.3 million Palestinians of the West Bank and Gaza, whatever the views of the intelligentsia. Even in the streets of Hebron, people said they had expected nothing from Washington and they had wanted Mr Arafat to go there to present their case. The Palestinian media, which are all officially controlled or influenced, lauded Mr Arafat's achievement at the summit.

Any fighting in the immediate future is most likely to be between the Israeli army and the 40,000-strong Palestinian police, many of whom, in fact, are combat troops. Palestinians fear that the army may be looking for an excuse to seek revenge for

its losses last week, particularly to the fighting around Joseph's Tomb in Nablus. Mr Arafat has stopped demonstrations at Israeli checkpoints, although some members of Fatah, his own organisation, Fatah, disagree with this.

The Palestinians' disappointment with the summit was mirrored across the Arab world. In Egypt, Amr Moussa, the Foreign Minister, said: "It is clear that the Israelis did not come to Washington to make progress. The proposals submitted by the Israeli delegation constitute a total retreat from the framework of peace."

■ Yigal Amir, his brother Hagar and Dror Adani, a friend in the army, were sentenced to additional jail terms in Tel Aviv for their plots to kill Yitzhak Rabin, the prime minister whom they finally assassinated at the end of last year. The judge, Amnon Shashan, described them as the "sons of evil".

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Kremlin says Lebed threatening to quit

PHIL REEVES
Moscow

The Kremlin yesterday acted swiftly to counteract rumblings from Alexander Lebed, Russia's security chief, that he may quit after less than four months in high office - a move which would free him to work exclusively on his campaign to succeed Boris Yeltsin.

At the same time, Mr Yeltsin pointedly endorsed the former general's peace deal in Chechnya, singling it out for praise during a radio address to the nation made in an effort to prove to his ailing army of critics that he is still in charge in Russia.

Mr Lebed, the Russian government's peace envoy to the war zone and the architect of the Chechen accord, had "fulfilled my instructions", said the president, who is in hospital awaiting a multiple coronary bypass operation later this year.

Such remarks signal a change of tack for Mr Yeltsin who has been increasingly frosty towards Mr Lebed since whisking him into the heart of the Kremlin in the hope of winning his 11m voters in the presidential elections in July. Mr Lebed's overt campaigning, and outspoken remarks - including a demand for the Interior Minister, Anatoly Kulikov, to be fired - have only served to increase the tension.

But, despite his praise, Mr Yeltsin's slow but clear six-minute address was also an attempt to reassert his authority after a fortnight in which Mr Lebed repeatedly challenged it. Yesterday, after the two men met for the first time in more than two months, the Kremlin issued a statement saying that Mr Lebed had threatened to quit, apparently because he was angered over an appointment to a committee handling

scrappy military posts, but Mr Yeltsin urged him to stay on. Whether this was accurate was uncertain.

On Wednesday, Mr Lebed hinted at his departure during a speech to the Russian lower house of parliament, or State Duma, during which he was heckled by shouts of "traitor" from MPs. Unlike most of their electorate, they see the deal as a sell-out to the rebels which will lead to the republic's secession. More than 90 parliamentarians have signed a letter to the constitutional court, accusing Mr Lebed of exceeding his powers.

Thousands of workers across the nation are staging stoppages, hunger strikes, after going unpaid for months. And the general's other main mission, that of crushing the country's rampant corruption, is going to be extremely hard to fulfil, not least because it has penetrated deep into the upper echelons of power.

wide access to the media, and the ability to raise big money - crucial tools in his battle to become president, which he would be loathe to forfeit.

Yet staying within the Yeltsin administration for too long could also damage his prospects. The Chechen deal is still highly precarious, although the separatists' leader, Zelimkhan Yandarbiyev, and the Russian prime minister, Viktor Chernomyrdin, pushed on with the process by signing a "joint declaration of principles" in Moscow yesterday.

Thousands of workers across the nation are staging stoppages, hunger strikes, after going unpaid for months. And the general's other main mission, that of crushing the country's rampant corruption, is going to be extremely hard to fulfil, not least because it has penetrated deep into the upper echelons of power.



Coup memories: Communists in Moscow celebrating the 1993 attempt to overthrow President Yeltsin. Photograph: AP

significant shorts

Taliban deny political round-up

Afghanistan's Islamist Taliban rulers denied they had been rounding up members of the ousted government of President Burhanuddin Rabbani in Kabul. Acting Information and Culture Minister Amir Khan Muttaqi said: "We are only interrogating those involved in looting in the Taliban's name." He said fewer than 70 people had been detained. Amnesty International accused the Taliban on Wednesday of seizing up to 1,000 prisoners in the capital. *Reuters - Kabul*

Muslim anger at Moscow police raid

Outraged Muslim leaders demanded apologies from authorities for a "barbarian" raid by riot police on Moscow's main mosque in which worshippers allegedly were beaten and jailed. The raid occurred on Tuesday evening amid growing Russian nervousness over Muslim fundamentalism, sparked in part by the war in Chechnya, and events in Afghanistan. Police said they were searching for weapons and criminals. *AP - Moscow*

US troops for Bosnia

A new force of 5,000 US troops will shortly leave Germany to cover the withdrawal of the 15,000 US troops in northern Bosnia when the peace implementation force mandate expires on 20 December, the Pentagon has announced. The new force will remain in Bosnia for six months as the US-based US component of the present 52,000-strong force withdraws. *Christopher Bellamy*

Armenia election doubt

Thousands of ballots cast in Armenia's disputed presidential vote were never counted, calling into question President Levon Ter-Petrosian's re-election victory, international observers said. A preliminary report issued two days after the 22 September election by the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe said the irregularities were not a "systematic attempt to deny the will of the people." *AP - Yerevan*

Russian in treason claim

Security police have charged a retired Russian navy captain with treason, alleging he passed state secrets about nuclear submarines to a Norwegian environmental organisation. A Federal Security Service spokesman said Alexander Nikitin was charged with treason, revealing state secrets and espionage. *Reuters - St Petersburg*

Plea for Burma sanctions

Democracy leader Aung San Suu Kyi has urged the European Commission to adopt sanctions against Burma for using forced and child labour. The International Confederation of Free Trade Unions, based in Brussels, Ms Suu Kyi made the call in a filmed interview smuggled out of Burma and shown at EC hearings on Monday. The hearings could lead to Burma being denied access to the European Generalised System of Preferences. *Reuters - Bangkok*

Albania in joint exercise

The first Albanian-German military exercise, involving 600 soldiers, got under way in northern Albania. Albanian Defence Minister Safet Zhulali said Albania was aiming for "modernisation of the army, in order to reach Nato standards, and our goal is to become Nato members." The exercise in Fushëkruq, north of Tirana, is part of the alliance's Partnership for Peace programme. *AP - Fushëkruq*

Mad cat disease

Liechtenstein reported its first case of a cat suffering from the feline equivalent of mad cow disease. The nine-year-old male cat was put to sleep after being diagnosed with Feline Spongiform Encephalopathy (FSE). *Reuters - Vaduz*

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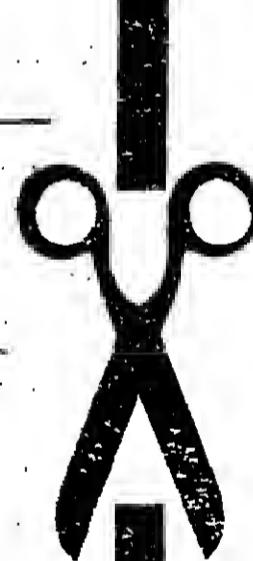
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14 international

Doonesbury wades in to cannabis row

DAVID USBORNE
New York

TUL Zonker. It appears you may have gone too far in your criticism of California's Attorney General, Dan Lungren, and what he did to that marijuana club in San Francisco. Have you heard? He is trying to have you rubbed out.

It is true. Once more, real-life Republicans are tangling with characters from fiction. In 1992, it was sitcom character Murphy Brown, lambasted by Dan Quayle for wilfully producing a child out of wedlock. Now it is Zonker Harris, the hippie in the Doonesbury cartoon strip.

In a week-long series of strips that started this Tuesday, Zonker and his pal Cornell are pondering a ballot initiative that is to be voted on by Californians on election day next

month. It demands that marijuana use be legalised for people with medical conditions such as Aids and cancer.

The initiative, which has widespread support in the state, is a pet hate of Mr Lungren, a long-time opponent of drug-use liberalisation. On 4 August, he made his point by raiding the Cannabis Buyers' Club in San Francisco and closing it down.

Hidden behind an anonymous office front, the club had been supplying marijuana to about 12,000 people claiming serious illnesses.

While in violation of the law, the club had long been tolerated by San Francisco's liberal leadership and even by the city police. A recent visit by this correspondent coincided with a march by club members in support of the ballot initiative, at which police officers acted as cheerful escorts.

"I can't believe anyone would

shut down the Cannabis Buyers' Club," Zonker lamented on Tuesday. "Who ordered the bust?" Cornell: "Dan Lungren, the State Attorney General. The local cops wouldn't do it, so they had to bring in Republicans". Zonker subsequently asks: "What country are we living in - Germany? Russia? Idaho?"

As unamused Mr Lungren held a news conference condemning the Doonesbury strip and its author, Garry Trudeau. He also asked both the distributor, the United Press Syndicate, and newspapers in California to drop the cartoon until the subject changes, or at least to run parallel disclaimers. So far, neither the newspapers nor the syndicate have paid any attention.

"No one should be laughing," Mr Lungren spat. "Make no mistake about it. These strips contribute to the national wim-

and-nod attitude toward drug use". Mr Lungren's objections echo the Bob Dole presidential campaign, which in recent days has relentlessly accused President Bill Clinton of cutting back on anti-drug efforts. In response, Mr Clinton yesterday signed a new law to combat the rapid rise in the US of methamphetamine abuse.

But like Mr Quayle with Ms Brown, Mr Lungren is taking a risk by targeting a highly popular cultural icon. The long-running Doonesbury is taken by 1,400 newspapers in the US and worldwide.

Among those disgusted is San Francisco's Democratic Mayor, Willie Brown, who compared the Attorney General's actions to those of the Nazi Gestapo. Dennis Peron, the still defiant founder of the Buyers' Club, suggested that Mr Lungren was behaving like a cry-baby. His final word: "Waaa!"

Prison protest: Relatives of ETA separatist prisoners protesting outside the parliament building in Vitoria, northern Spain. They want the prisoners moved to jails in the Basque region

Photograph: David Aguilar/AP



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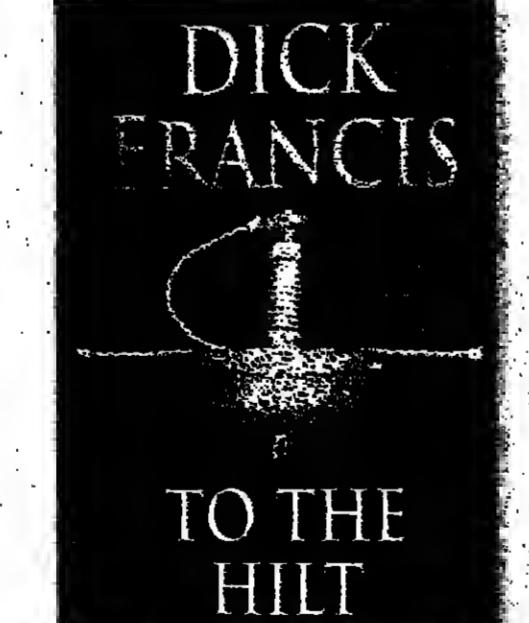
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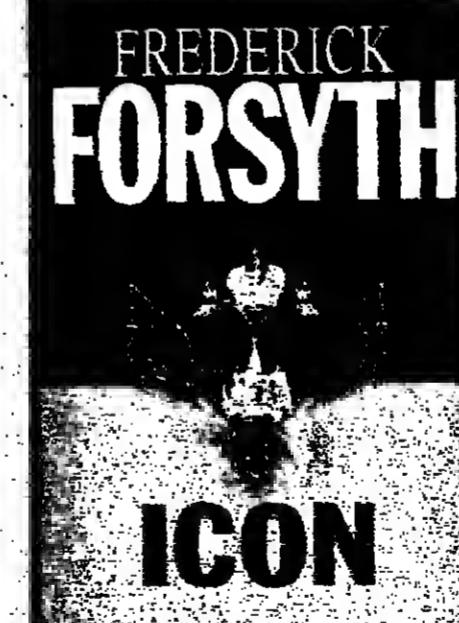
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Bosnia and Serbia bury the hatchet

TONY BARBER
Europe Editor

The presidents of Serbia and Bosnia agreed yesterday to establish diplomatic relations between their two countries, dealing a severe blow to Bosnian Serb hopes of splitting Bosnia and uniting the Serb-controlled zone with Serbia. Presidents Slobodan Milosevic and Alija Izetbegovic reached the agreement in Paris at talks hosted by President Jacques Chirac of France.

The breakthrough was announced two days after the United Nations lifted sanctions imposed on Serbia in 1992 in retaliation for Mr Milosevic's role in fomenting rebellions by Serb minorities in Croatia and Bosnia.

"The time of confrontation and conflicts should be replaced with a time of construction and prosperity," Mr Milosevic and Mr Izetbegovic said in a joint statement.

The Serbian-Bosnian agreement mirrors an accord signed by Serbia and Croatia last August. Crucially, it states explicitly that rump Yugoslavia (Serbia and Montenegro) acknowledges Bosnia's independence and territorial integrity.

In effect, more than five years after the fighting in former Yugoslavia broke out, Mr Milosevic has renounced the very goals that launched him on the path of war. These were to unite all the Serb populations of former Yugoslavia into one state, and even to annex parts of Croatia and Bosnia to create a Greater Serbian state.

As things have turned out, Mr Milosevic's achievement boils down to the almost total de-

struction at Croat hands of historic Serb communities in Croatia, and the creation of a Bosnian Serb Republic in Bosnia that is a pariah in the world and hostile to him personally. Yet he has the consolidation of ruling unchallenged in Serbia and being viewed by Western governments as a man whose co-operation was essential to securing peace in the Balkans.

The Serbian-Bosnian accord



Milosevic: Signed peace agreement in Paris

does not necessarily mean that Bosnia's internal problems become easier to solve. The Bosnian Serb leadership campaigned in last month's Bosnian elections on a platform of secession from Bosnia, and candidates supporting this message were victorious in Serb-populated areas.

Perhaps the most difficult challenge facing post-war Bosnia is how to return as many refugees as possible home, and thereby end the physical separation of nationalities which occurred in the war and which Bosnian Serbs and Croats seem determined to maintain.

Britain to host peace summit

CHRISTOPHER BELLAMY
Defence Correspondent

Britain will host the 50-nation international conference to agree arrangements for maintaining peace in Bosnia next year, it was confirmed yesterday.

The conference will be at Lancaster House, London, on 4-5 December, and will follow the pattern of the Peace Implementation Conference in London last December.

High-level representatives, including foreign ministers, from some 50 countries and the three newly elected members of the Bosnian Presidency - Alija Izetbegovic, Kresimir Zubak and Momicilo Krajisnik - will attend the meeting, chaired by Malcolm Rifkind, the Foreign Secretary, and Baroness Chalker, Minister for Overseas Development.

The most urgent item will be to agree the role of the military

follow-on force (Fo-For) which must replace the existing peace Implementation Force (I-For) after 20 December. Nato's North Atlantic Council will then meet on 10 December to confirm military plans.

A follow-on military force will continue to be involved in arms control, which will be discussed at the conference. However, it is also expected to concentrate far more on supporting civilian reconstruction. The conference will try to get Bosnia's leaders to reaffirm their commitment to the Dayton peace accords.

It will also discuss the contentious issue of war criminals - there has been increasing criticism of the Nato governments for not ordering I-For to be more active on the matter. The conference will pressure Bosnian leaders to surrender war criminals hiding in their territory.



Great Leader's aura fails to illuminate Korean mystery



In the name of the father: The late Kim Il Sung and original Great Leader (left) and his son Kim Jong Il; the latter has not assumed his father's full panoply of titles and power

Sonbong, North Korea — "When you finally meet someone whom you've been brought up all your life to love and trust beyond all others," said Han Song Chun, "it's a proud and very moving moment. It was in 1994. I only shook hands with him and said hello, but he exceeded all my expectations. He was much more full of abundant love and charity, much more learned and brilliant, his voice was gentler and more melodious. In short, he was the Great Leader, Kim Jong Il."

If the man described by Mr Han, my guide in North Korea, sounds more like a living saint than one of the most feared rulers on earth, then this is no coincidence — the myths surrounding Kim Jong Il, and his late father, the original Great Leader, Kim Il Sung, always had more in common with religious fundamentalism than the conventional Marxist personality cults of China or the Soviet Union. Stalin and Mao were Uncle and Father to their people, but to men like Mr Han, the rulers of North Korea — the late Kim Il Sung, the 54-year-old Kim Jong Il, and the Workers' Party which they have successively lead — are more like Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

Just before the birth of the junior Kim, according to his official biography, a swallow descended from heaven to announce the coming of a prodigious general, who will rule over all the world". Above his birthplace, a simple hut on the hill

Economic distress is creating pressure for change, writes Richard Lloyd Parry

mountain of Paekdu, a double rainbow and a "Guiding Star" appeared. Just as an earlier Saviour, 2,000 years before, argued precociously with the elders in the temple, so little Kim Jong Il was, by his early teens, a leading exponent of North Korea's home grown doctrine of *Juche*, or "self-reliance".

Instead of crosses, party officials like Mr Han wear miniature badges bearing the face of Kim Il Sung whose renderings in the official iconography unconsciously borrow religious imagery. In one poster in Sonbong, the late leader stands erect in front of a cone-shaped peak. The mountain's snowy flanks, protruding from behind his shoulders, look like nothing so much as a pair of angel's wings.

But, like many religions, there is a mystery at the heart of North Korea's leadership. There are nagging doubts about the degree of power wielded by Kim the Son. Since his father's sudden death in 1994, he has made few appearances. His public utterances amount to a single sentence delivered at a military rally years ago. Most tellingly, in the two years since his father's demise, he has still not taken on the paramount titles of state president and general secretary of the Workers' Party. The question of leadership is ex-

ceptionally important for a regime which remains one of the most unpredictable in the world. North Korea combines a Cold War army (around 1 million troops massed on the border with its arch-enemy, South Korea) with a Third World economy in which industry and agriculture are declining so fast that it is barely able to feed its 22 million people. Last month, Mr Han and his comrades were welcoming foreign businessmen to a conference designed to attract desperately needed investment to a free trade zone. Forty-eight hours later, a crew of commandos from a North Korean submarine were shooting it out with their South Korean counterparts after being washed up in an abortive spy mission.

Hard information is so scarce that two opposite interpretations of the state of the North Korean leadership have arisen. The optimistic view finds good reasons for Kim Jong Il's reluctance to assume the full mantle of power. Confucian ethics and filial loyalty, it is pointed out, makes a hasty transfer of power unseemly. Kim is fully confirmed as leader of the armed forces, a position from which he can judge the best moment to claim his birthright. And in several areas North Korea has acted with a shrewdness indicating a

collapse must come, simply in the sense that the regime can't go on indefinitely as it is", says Mr Foster-Carter. "At some point economic distress must translate into political change, either in the form of grass roots rebellion, or from the centre." In religious terms, the question is whether North Korea must first suffer a painful death, in order to rise again.

Seoul fears new wave of terror

RICHARD LLOYD PARRY

In other circumstances, you might have taken them as no more than random acts of urban violence.

Late on Tuesday night, in two of the most lawless cities in East Asia, a pair of expatriates were savagely attacked. The first incident occurred in Vladivostok, the crime-racked port of the Russian Far East, where a 34-year-old man was found bludgeoned to death on the stairs of his apartment block.

The second took place in Phnom Penh, equally notorious capital of Cambodia, where a 46-year-old hotel executive lies in a coma after being shot in his car by an unidentified motorcycle. The crimes were separated by 2,000 miles, but several things conspire to cast them in a sinister light.

For a start, neither man appears to have been robbed, although the wallet of the Vladivostok victim, a diplomat, contained the cash equivalent of \$1,000. Most suspicious of all, the attacks were both carried out on South Koreans, at a time when tension has escalated between North and South Korea. The suspicion is that the attacks

may be the latest shots in a dangerous confrontation between the Cold War rivals.

The latest troubles began a fortnight ago with the discovery of a washed-up North Korean submarine on the coast of South Korea. It had apparently come to grief while engaged on a spying mission, and 23 of its crew have so far been killed or captured. Pyongyang claimed, implausibly, that the sub had simply drifted out of course. Seoul insists equally unconvincingly that the craft was the precursor of a full-scale invasion.

With the discreet mediation of the United States, the North had over the last two years been making faltering steps towards better relations with the outside world. Last year, South Korea grudgingly provided food aid after serious shortages; three weeks ago, the Stalinist North hosted an unprecedented investment forum in an effort to promote a free-trade zone. This week, however, the South Korean president, Kim Young Sam, announced that further aid and negotiation were out of the question, and put the forces on high alert.

At a meeting with the American-led United Nations Com-

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Labour must aspire to a liberal decency

In a week of speeches and pronouncements from the Labour party faithful, barely anyone in the conference chamber has mentioned the S-word. Stakeholding, launched last January as Tony Blair's big idea, failed to turn up at Blackpool this week. Should we miss Mr Stakeholder? Not a bit. The trouble with the stakeholding idea is that no one out there in the real world ever understood what it meant. Even the supposedly clever gang of policy wonks and journalists struggled to get a grip on the idea, enabling endless interpretations and re-interpretations of the word. So far from providing a useful shorthand for Blairism, the word stakeholding actually tangled up the thoughts that the Labour leader wanted the public to understand.

To prove the point: a perfect real-world case of stakeholding hurt on the public agenda this week—but not one in Blackpool mentioned it. Norwich Union announced on Wednesday it planned to abandon its mutual status, buy out the policyholders who own it, and float on the stock market. There is nothing like a mutual society to encapsulate what it means for people to have a stake. And as our survey revealed yesterday, such stakeholding insurance companies—those which are owned by their policyholders—tend to offer better value for money, too. But if anyone in Blackpool had used the S-word to explain the event to voters, they would have fallen asleep.

No putative Labour minister picked up a standing ovation with a speech about insurance policies. Nor are the votes of middle England likely to be won by a debate on forms of ownership. No matter what Mr Blair may have intended, stakeholding never represented the really important ideas that Labour needs to campaign on for the next election.

Instead, education, education and education were the hot topics of the week in Blackpool. Why? Because the Labour Party has sensibly sought to spend the week providing examples of the kind of policies it believes illustrate the two bigger and better themes of aspiration and decency. These two ideas, for all their vagueness, can at least be exemplified with real policy that interests real people. In fact, aspiration and decency appeal to all of us, regardless of our potential to swing the vote. Once Blair had set the tone, it was left to two of his key lieutenants, David Blunkett and Jack Straw, to flesh out the bones.

Mr Blunkett began with a literacy campaign. Top marks for that. If we want to lift our overall educational performance, there is no better way than to raise the game for the lowest 40 per cent. There are some practical difficulties in providing extra tuition in the summer holidays for 10- and 11-year-olds who are struggling with reading and arithmetic. But Labour is right to recognise that those children will be

wasting their time at secondary school unless they have the essential tools to get started. Equally, Mr Blunkett's call for a new Citizens' Service for young people raises Labour's sights. Teenagers have work experience; why not get a bit of social responsibility experience, too? There should be no party argument over this idea: children should learn early and often to help others.

By emphasising help for those who receive the worst education, and enjoy the narrowest range of opportunity, Labour can succeed in infusing its traditional social justice message with an appropriate sternness. However,



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the best. As for decency, Jack Straw provided a few cases in point in his speech yesterday. Notorious for his concern about noisy neighbours and squeegee merchants, Mr Straw appeals directly to the honest ordinary families, grimly enduring the crime on their estates and the harassment of inconsiderate neighbours. Yesterday's proposals—rather tougher on crime than on the causes of crime—should further endear him to the swing voters he needs.

In Labour's vision of a decent society, people will not own hand guns. Nor, in Mr Straw's decent world, will drug abusers who commit crimes be permitted to go on shooting up. Mr Straw doubtless has an eye on the successful drug rehabilitation programmes that have been introduced into the criminal justice system in the US. A starting amount of crime in Britain is now drug related. Put drug addicts in prison and you do little to cure the habit or stop them re-offending when their time is served. Give offenders the alternative of treatment programmes on probation and you give them the chance to start being decent again.

But one worry lingers. C2s in the West Midland marginals may lap this stuff up for the time being. But Mr Straw is coming quite close to sounding a touch illiberal. Talk of curfews for the young, and compulsory treatment for the addicted may be well-intentioned enough, but there is a fine line between requiring cer-

tain responsibilities of our citizens and the intolerance of individual freedom and rights. Even Mr Blunkett's plans—forcing children to miss their holidays, obliging them to do good—risk that whiff of authoritarianism.

Aspirations and decency are fine, broad values to underpin Labour's campaign—indeed, to underpin a government. But the party should not get too carried away in its appeal to middle England: an aspiring and decent society is a liberal society too.

It's an honour to be here

O dear. Inadvertently knighting Christopher Patten in this space yesterday is one matter—but to do so on a day when Her Majesty's politics are already under question is quite another. Well, there is only one excuse: subliminally, we clearly think the noble and saintly Mr Patten really should be Sir Chris.

Of course, this set us wondering who else we might honour for a day. Perhaps we should have a sort of transient *Independent* ennoblement, a kind of Warholian 24 hours of illustriousness. This week alone we might have chosen Sir Ian Greer, for services to democracy, Dame Harriet Harman, for cross sense in the face of adversity, and Sir Ben Pimlott, because anyone who gets that close to the Queen deserves a sword on his shoulder. Any other suggestions?

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Save Lords from Tory steamroller

Sir: With the new session it is opportune to assess the constitutional fall-out from the Lords' vote on the Asylum Bill in July. It has, I fear, embarrassed those of us who favour a continuance of a hereditary element in the legislature.

The parliamentary objection is that the hereditary peers are overwhelmingly Conservative. This, it is argued, precludes an even-handed treatment of Conservative and Labour measures and gives the legislature a permanent imbalance.

This objection was more theoretical than real under the former conduct of business. Conservative managers accepted that the Lords' role as a revisory (ie amending) Chamber extended to Conservative measures, and were generally content to leave the issue to the experienced legislators who were regular attenders. (In practice, it depended on Conservative cross-voting and/or abstention and a preponderant cross-bench vote.)

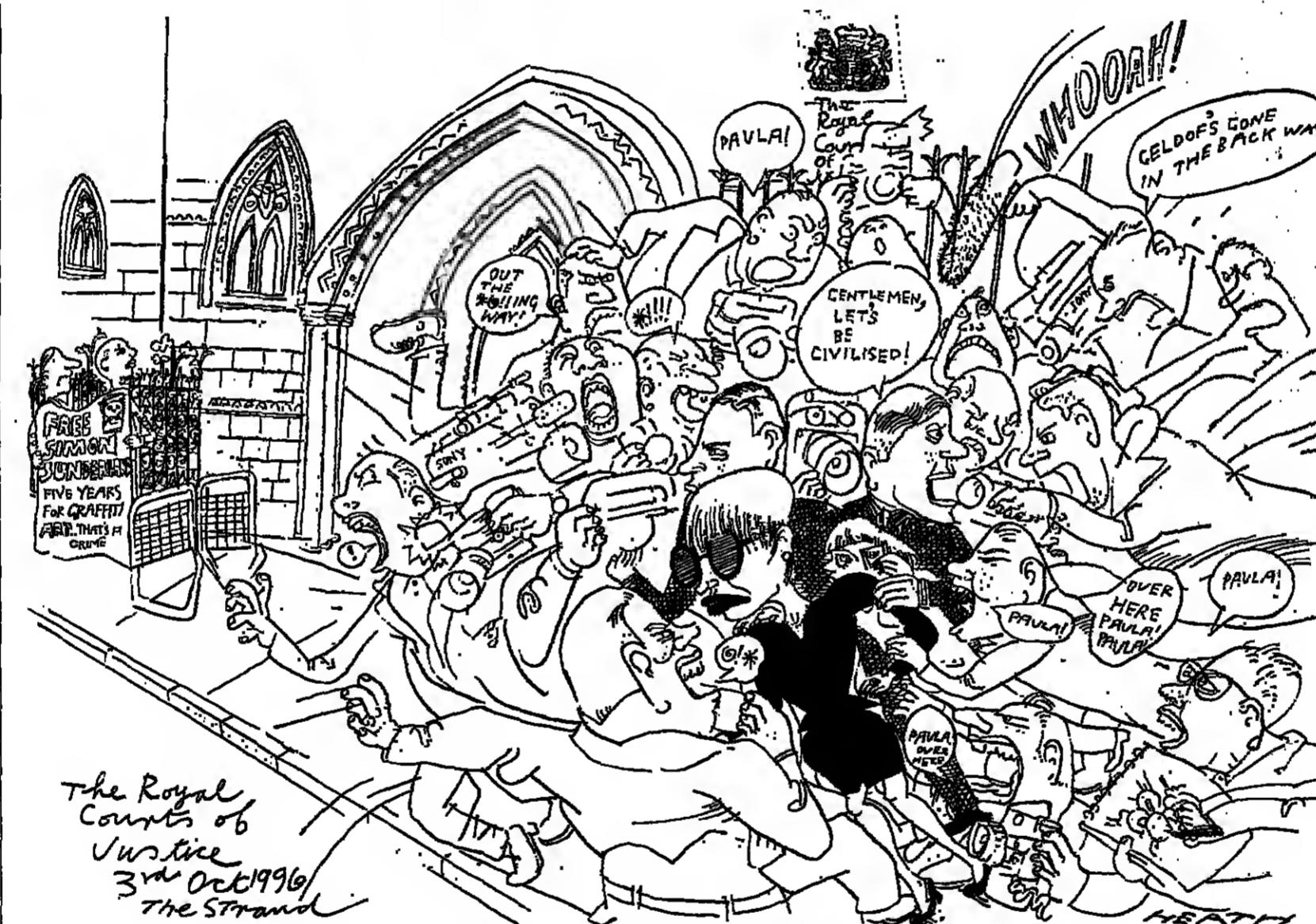
The Asylum Bill was not the first example of a change of practice, but it was a significant one. At a late stage the Government proposed an amendment denying social benefits to asylum claimants who fail to claim immediately on entry. The Lords accepted that the asylum system had been grossly abused, and that the remedy was to limit benefit to those who claimed promptly. But, in order to avoid reducing a significant number of genuine asylum claimants to utter destitution, on a division they modified the Government's amendment to allow three days' grace for claims after entry. This was not acceptable to the Government, who used their Commons majority (which includes 126 "payroll" votes) to reject the Lords' vote.

On return to the Lords, the Government sent out a strong whip to all their supporters (including those who rarely attend). In consequence, the Lords' previous decision was overturned by 182 votes (including 20 payroll) to 168. Of the hereditary Conservative peers, only two voted to uphold the previous decision.

Any pretence that this reflected the balance of the argument in debate can be variously tested: the argument for the Government was the same as that previously rejected by the unreinforced House; all the bishops who voted supported the previous decision and so did the overwhelming majority of cross-bench peers.

Hopefully we shall revert to the former practice of business management. Still more to be hoped is that, if there is to be legislative intervention, the former practice may be institutionalised by a system of representative peers on the lines of the former representative Scottish and Irish peers.

LORD SIMON OF GLASDALE
House of Lords
London SW1



Michael Heath's Britain: The paparazzi descend on Paula Yates

Fertility case husband did sign

Sir: If Mrs DB was married in the Church of England according to the rites set out in the Prayer Book, ("Fertility has a widow" is cruel and unnatural", 3 October) then her husband will have heard the priest say "First [marriage] is ordained for the procreation of children". His signature on the register, witnessed by the priest and others, would therefore be evidence that he accepted this. Mrs DB's husband will effectively have given his written consent.

BASIL DEWING
Great Malvern, Worcestershire

How world let Rwanda down

Sir: David Orr ("Rwanda racked by genocide of stealth", 23 September) writes: "Despite the spending of hundreds of millions of pounds by the international community and the presence of thousands of United Nations and aid agency personnel the two ethnic communities seem no nearer reconciliation."

How much of that money was dedicated to reconciliation? Millions were directed to the refugee camps to cater for the many innocent Rwandese, but also catered for the EX-FAR and Interahamwe militias who had committed genocide in Rwanda.

Not a penny was dedicated to disarming them, isolating and arresting them so that they could face the courts of justice. Not a penny was dedicated to removing these camps away from the borders in order to prevent the incursions we are having today.

Many of the "unarmed

civilians" who have died in the North-west of Rwanda are militia killed during encounters with government soldiers or caught

laying mines and other acts of sabotage. Where people have been caught in crossfire or excesses by the army have been acknowledged, harsh measures have been taken against those concerned.

MARY KAYITESI BLEWITT

Public Relations Officer

Embassy of Rwanda

London WC2

1 October)

You might as well have given readers the rest of the fairy-tale.

That the Destiny Stone was

originally Jacob's pillow (Genesis

28) and was carried by Pharaoh's daughter Scota and her boyfriend, Gaytheilus, to Ireland.

Only the completely cuckoo and

the curiously place any credence on the Lia Fail hokum. That the Tories

hope to gain some electoral

advantage by returning it shows how daft and desperate they are.

Better by far to take the thing up

in a helicopter and drop it into the

deepest part of Loch Ness. With

luck, it might brain the Monster

and so kill two Scotch myths with

one stone.

JIM BRUNTON

Edinburgh

1 October)

Drop that daft Stone of Destiny

Sir: Why did you stop short when stating "the Stone of Scone was originally used as a coronation throne by Irish kings and taken to Scotland in the ninth century"? (report, September 30)

You might as well have given

readers the rest of the fairy-tale.

That the Destiny Stone was

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daughter Scota and her boyfriend,

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and so kill two Scotch myths with

one stone.

JIM BRUNTON

Edinburgh

1 October)

Neither category has a monopoly on grief. Neither has the right to possess people or the issue. But both activism and care are necessary.

JOHN NICHOLSON

Director

George House Trust

Manchester

1 October)

No monopoly on grief over Aids

SIR JOHN LYTTLE (27 September) portrays "Aids professionals" as "medical staff who care for those with HIV" and "activists". This is a false divide, undermining some of the hard-hitting comments which rightly follow.

Those who provide support for

Jury failed to get the message

Sir: Glenda Cooper's article "Twelve confused men and women" (30 September) reawakens an anxiety that I have had since doing jury service some time ago.

It was a complicated case and we were told again and again by the defence and prosecution that we had to be sure "beyond reasonable doubt", and the judge reiterated this warning in his summing up. All my fellow jurors and jurywomen took this to mean that if any of the defendants could offer any explanation—however ludicrous—we should accept it.

One of the defendants had a sum of money in his pocket which was the exact sum arising from a drug deal which everyone agreed had taken place. He said that by an amazing coincidence it was the sum of money he had got from selling his car to a man whose name he couldn't remember and in a place he'd forgotten.

Did the jury believe him? Of course they didn't, but their reaction was "We've been told if there's any reasonable doubt we have to acquit him, and although none of us think it did happen the way he says, it is possible that it could have happened". He was acquitted on a majority verdict.

The judge asked the jury to stay on when the defendant was sentenced on another drug-dealing charge and the clerk of the court read out a string of previous convictions.

I believe that the message the barristers and the judge are sending out bears little relationship to the one that the jury is receiving.

SAM ROTHENSTEIN

Braintree, Essex

Islamic treasure
Sir: You published a superb photograph (30 September) of a painted and gilded wooden room from Syria, circa 1800, which is coming up for sale at Sotheby's on 11 October.

As a historian of Islamic art, I find it very sad that so few in our profession are willing to speak out against the dismemberment and wholesale shipment of such treasures. Do we not treat Islamic art with much less respect than we would accord to our own?

DR JANE JAKEMAN

Oxford

1 October)

Rural pong

Sir: I don't for one moment believe that "the pong in the countryside" has been around for as long as farming has existed, as Charles Honey of the National Farmers Union suggests ("Farmers asked to spread a little sweetness", 1 October). It is the result of agribusiness and intensive farming, and is anything but natural, or a thing to be accepted as part of country life.

JAMES R HUGHES

London NW8

1 October)

In a spin

Sir: It is surely not often that a phrase leaps from birth to the status of crashing cliché at such speed that the precise date of its origin must still be fresh in somebody's memory; in which hope I ask, is there not still time for the originator of the term "spin doctor" to be identified—and quickly put to death?

J D HUMPHREYS

Bath

Anonymous donor
Sir: There is an even easier way of preventing charities chasing one for donations than that described by Brian Vernon (letter, 30 September). Ask the Charities Aid Foundation to give you anonymous vouchers. They have no address or name—and CAF do not reveal their source.

CAROLE CULL

Reading, Berkshire

Post letters to Letters to the Editor, and include a daytime telephone number.
Fax: 0171-293 2056; e-mail: letters@independent.co.uk.
E-mail correspondents are asked to give a postal address. Letters may be edited for length and clarity.

In the second extract from his new biography, Ben Pimlott reviews 1992, the Queen's *annus horribilis*, when each month brought fresh traumas and she sought refuge in letters from a sympathetic public



The sting in the fairy-tale

In the early Eighties a new borderline was being crossed in the privacy debate. So long as "private" lives were irreproachable, it was possible to defend "privacy" in general from a high moral platform. It was more difficult once that changed.

A leader in the field of free sexual morals was the Queen's second son, aged 21 at the time of the Waleses' wedding, and increasingly seen as the late 20th-century equivalent of a Regency buck. The popular press was full of Prince Andrew's exploits, about which he did not bother to be particularly reticent.

Unlike his older brother, whose female relationships had tended to be upper class, Andrew's liaisons were more democratic, adding to the tabloid friction. He acquired an inevitable nickname, "Randy Andy," highly publicised friendship with actress Koo Stark and Katie Rabett, and his alleged affair with former model Vickie Hodge deeply upset the Queen. "Audrey Whiting, the *Sunday Mirror*'s royal watcher, confided in June 1984, "She has made it clear she will

not tolerate any more 'indiscreet behaviour'."

Actually, the opposite was the case. The Queen made little attempt to curb the activities of her children, especially the younger ones. "She should have told them off more," considers one ex-courier. "The trouble is that the Queen hates dictating to the family," says another. "I think she's terrified of her children," says a former adviser to the Prince of Wales.

"She's afraid they won't do what she tells them."

If she was not a hugging mother, she was also a far cry from a censorious one. She treated Andrew with a special indulgence. "She was happy about his relationship with Koo Stark – a very nice, gentle girl," says a former courier.

Each month of the 40th anniversary year of the accession seemed to bring a new embarrassment, humiliation, error, or accusation. The year 1992 was an *annus horribilis* indeed: in January came the photographs of Fergie on holiday with a Texas oil millionaire; in February, the image of Diana alone at the Taj Mahal;

in March, the separation of the Duke and Duchess of York; in April, the divorce of Princess Anne and Mark Phillips; in May, the departure of Fergie from the marital home, taking her daughters with her ...

But it was the problems of the Prince and Princess of Wales which caused most concern. In retrospect – in view of the episodes apart, semi-public quarrels and heart-to-hearts with garrulous friends – the remarkable thing is that the details remained secret for so long. To those who knew the couple well, the gap between the gaudily reflective Prince and the sharp, whimsical, brittle Princess was obvious within a year of their wedding. The Queen and Prince Philip chose not to notice. When Diana turned up late for meals, or left them early without explanation, her behaviour was ignored.

Charles, according to his friends, blamed his parents for not being more supportive. "He felt very let down by his unsympathetic mother and father," says a confidante. "When his marriage went wrong, he felt criticised by them."

Perhaps they were more concerned than they seemed. "The Queen was aware of stresses and strains," says a courier from the period. "She was wholly sympathetic towards Charles, in fact rather one-eyed in her approach." Once, the Queen and her husband dined *a quatre* with friends whose children also had troublesome marriages, for the specific purpose of "wondering together where they went wrong".

The difficulties of the Prince and Princess had long been the subject of rumour – but little of it was backed by hard fact, and most only half-believed by non-tabloid readers. Then in June 1992 came *Diana: Her True Story*, a book by Andrew Morton clearly produced with the encouragement or connivance of the Princess.

It was the logical outcome of the trend towards openness, ending a century and a half of royal reserve on personal matters and replacing it with the opposite: royal exhibitionism.

Readers were intrigued to be told – and the Royal Family was horrified for the world to be informed – that while pregnant with a potential future king, the Princess of Wales had thrown herself down the wooden staircase at Sandringham; that she had slashed her wrists with a razor blade; and that, in an attempt to rescue her from the terrible psychic consequences of becoming one of the most admired women in the world, she had been dispatched to a succession of therapists.

The book rang true, and it was a new kind of book although its style was that of a romantic novel, it could not be

dismissed as scandal-mongering. It was a moral classic about a young woman who had entered the legendary world which millions dreamt about, and who found that the "model family" was a myth.

There was another aspect to the hook. If it presented the Princess as vulnerable and unable to cope, it also painted a hostile portrait of her husband – blaming him both for his lack of understanding and for his continuing relationship with Camilla Parker Bowles. At the same time, Morton presented the Royal Family not as a haven of domestic virtue but as unhelpful and self-absorbed.

The strongest theme of the book was a juxtaposition of warmth and coldness. On the one hand, there was Diana, "tactile, emotional, gently irreverent and spontaneous"; on the other, there were the icy Windsors, with their unfriendly mansions where the Princess found the atmosphere so dispiriting that it was liable to bring on a hulma attack.

A couple of decades earlier, a seriously negative report about the Queen's family would have been unthinkable. The Morton book released all inhibitions. Now a bounty hunt for worse revelations, grimmer details, wider scandals, began in earnest.

In August, the *Daily Mirror* published a picture of the Duchess of York – separated, but still married – bare-breasted beside a pool having her toes kissed. The simmering circulation war between the major tabloids became total:

editors ransacked attics for old material which, in the past, had seemed too damaging to use. *The Sun* made public the two-and-a-half-year-old tape recording of a telephone conversation in which the Princess of Wales spoke with great affection to a friend, James Gilbey, who referred to her as "Squidgy" and "Squidge". In it, she described her marriage as "torture". Recounting one difficult family meal at Sandringham, she said: "I was very bad at lunch and I nearly started blubbing ... I just felt really sad and empty and thought 'bloody hell, after all I've done for this fucking family'."

The monarchy's domestic problems became part of its evolving image; no longer a model family, but an all too common one – although, as it was also frequently pointed out, three failed marriages out of four children was above the national norm.

There were plenty of shocks and embarrassments to come. In the autumn of 1994 Jonathan Dimbleby's biography of Prince Charles contained an admission from Charles of his adultery with Mrs Parker Bowles and presented Diana as quirky, self-obsessed and paranoid. But it also revealed the Prince's own view of his childhood and upbringing.

Morton had painted the Queen as an aloof mother; not unkind, but disengaged. Others had commented on the Queen's reported inability to show physical affection, and tendency to put her children after her duty. Dimbleby's references to the Queen and Prince Philip were brief. Since,

the Queen did not let her daughter-in-law have the last word. After the *Panorama* interview, she consulted the Prime Minister, the Archbishop of Canterbury and senior household staff. Then she made a pre-emptive strike, writing letters to both the Prince and Princess pronouncing, with her husband's support, that an early divorce was desirable. The tone of these letters was more measured than she felt. According to one close source, they came out of a deep exasperation, and of a desire to state her position in incontrovertible prose because, as she had learnt, "bulimics rewrite history in 24 hours".

When the contents of the letter became publicly known, the Princess of Wales at first seemed taken aback. Then her lawyers began negotiating a divorce settlement in earnest.

As for the Queen, she carried on. She led a more solitary existence than in the past. The number of intimate friends among her contemporaries was declining. In September 1993, Bobo MacDonald, her childhood nurse and then royal dresser for 67 years – and her relentless custodian, daily companion, confidante and friend – died at the age of 89. With her husband often away, the Queen frequently dined on her own.

If she was lonely, she did not say. But she was not immune to the strains and humiliations suffered by the Royal Family. She took comfort in her mailbag – many times larger than at the start of the reign – of letters written by ordinary people expressing concern. They often reflected her more than the polite or embarrassed sympathy of friends. "You see," she would say, turning them over, "they really do understand."



Tomorrow: Bad Advice
Edited extracts from
The Queen
By Ben Pimlott
Abridged by Paul Vallely
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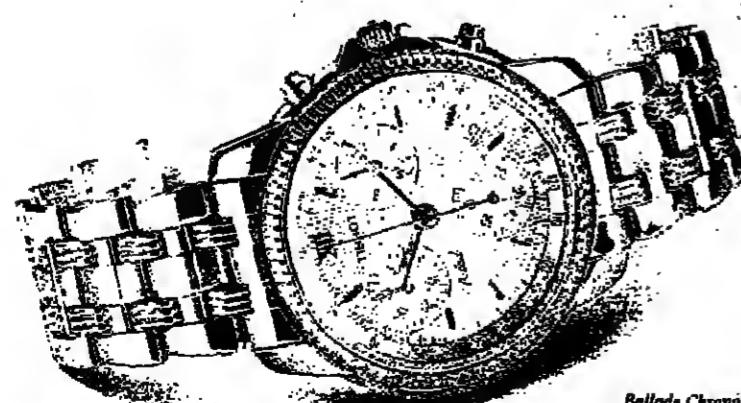


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A reliable litmus test that autumn's here



Miles Kington

Today – 50 sure signs that autumn is upon us ...

1. Strange new programmes start to appear on TV.
2. Men on TV say, "And now we're going straight back to the party conference at Blackpool/Brighton/Bournemouth ..." after which they say nothing, because you have just switched them off.
3. You finally throw away the piece of garden furniture you've been meaning to mend all summer.
4. Someone asks you if you're going skiing this winter.
5. Newspapers print the final county cricket analyses.
6. The first football matches are cancelled because of the weather.
7. The *Radio Times* says: "Yes, Angus, Ian and Paul are back again!"
8. Isobars huddle closer together for warmth in the weather chart.
9. You hear someone saying: "Anyone seen my bicycle lights?"
10. Someone further down the road lights a bonfire.
11. The wind changes.
12. The smoke from the bonfire blows across the road.
13. There are multiple pile-ups on the road.
14. Local headlines say: "Police Press Charges against Bonfire Crash Horror Man."
15. The first 1997 calendars appear in the shops.
16. The last 1996 calendars and diaries ("Now 90 per cent off marked price!") vanish from the shops.
17. Women on TV say: "And now more news from the autumn fashion show!", after which they say nothing else, because you have just switched them off.
18. You overhear people saying: "I can't believe it's less than three months away!"
19. You find yourself wondering where all the hot

water bottles in the house are. 20. The *Big Issue* sellers look colder than usual.

21. Pubs look more inviting than usual.

22. You start running over little objects in the lane, and think with horror they must be birds or small animals, but actually they're only conkers.

23. You get a postcard from one of your summerhouse house martin visitors, saying,

"Well, we made it to Egypt all right, and it's lovely and warm here, and you must drop in if you're ever passing this way..."

24. You overhear people trying to imitate a Scottish accent, saying, "Aye, the evenings are fair drawing in!"

25. Women's magazines suddenly seem bereft of ideas because although in summer you can have

features saying: "Shed Those Pounds in Time For the Holidays!" or "What They'll Be Wearing on the Beach This Summer!", it's not possible to have features headed "Put that Flab Back On In Time For Autumn!" or "What They'll Be Wearing for Bonfire Night this year!"

26. You realise you have a boot with a hole in the sole.

27. You make a mental note to get the lawn mower serviced in good time this year.

28. You overhear people saying: "You wouldn't think they could still have a hosepipe ban in weather like this!"

29. You make a mental note to find space to put away the barbecue/deck chairs/hammock.

30. You bring washing in from the line after a sunny day, and it's still damp.

31. You start walking into cobwebs a lot.

32. You see mysterious unmarked lorries going through the streets late at night, which are carrying

wrapping paper, artificial snow and Christmas cards to secret destinations.

33. The 1997 *Beano Annual* starts selling out.

34. Haircutters start saying: "Going anywhere this winter, then?"

35. You start overhearing people saying things like:

"But we had her over on Boxing Day last year! It's their turn to have her!"

36. Your children start saying that they want the new Spiderman Car for Christmas.

37. You didn't know there was a new Spiderman car.

38. You don't know how your children know.

39. You discover that there

are whole new TV commercials going out at times when you thought it was safe for children to watch TV.

40. Advertising things like Spiderman cars ...

41. The local headlines say: "Police Drop Charges Against Bonfire Crash Horror Man."

42. Haircutter says: "No, I'm not going anywhere either."

43. You hear someone say: "I'm not sure Angus and Ian and Paul are as funny this year."

44. Someone on radio says: "Well, Parliament has reassembled, so that is the last of our morning recess programmes at 8.45am ..."

45. Newspapers try to sum up the impact of party conferences.

46. You see the new Spiderman car actually for sale.

47. You find your bicycle lights, but they're not working.

48. You find your hot-water bottles, but they're leaking.

49. You finally put your deck chairs away, but they're sagging.

50. You hear someone saying: "All right, all right, we'll have her on Boxing Day again, BUT THIS IS THE LAST TIME!"

From Istanbul to Oslo, the market marches on



Hamish McRae

Share prices are surging around the world. But will anyone benefit from the booming stock markets other than those who invest in equities?

Onwards and upwards go the world stock markets – what does it mean? The British market hit a new high on Wednesday, with the *Financial Times* index of the largest 100 companies, the Footsie 100, breaching 4,000. But this is not just a UK phenomenon; it is world-wide. On Wall Street the Dow Jones index is within a whisker of breaking through 6,000 for the first time. Markets in Amsterdam, Brussels, Copenhagen, Dublin, Frankfurt, Istanbul and Oslo all hit new highs this week. Only in Tokyo is the stock market still depressed.

So the boom is not a comment on the Blair/Brown political platform, nor a celebration of the Government's performance. It is not about politics at all – though it has profound political and social implications. It is about economics and perhaps about emotion too.

The markets around the world have become convinced that something has changed. There will doubtless be recessions some time in the future, but for the moment professional investors believe that the world economy is on the threshold of some sort of golden age. Inflation, the great internal threat to the market system, is moribund. Communism, the great external threat, is dead. While in some parts of the world, particularly Continental Europe, unemployment is still a grave concern, in the US it is down to 5 per cent and seems set to stay there.

This confidence about the state of the world economy may not yet be fully reflected in British or Continental European politics but it is very evident in the US. An opinion poll in *USA Today* on Monday showed that a large majority of Americans believe they are better off than they were four years ago, something that seems to be reinforcing President Clinton's lead in the polls.

The moment that people are convinced that everything is marvellous is usually the moment when things start to go wrong – so perhaps we should be on guard. Share prices at an historic high should carry the same health warning. The professional investment advisers are divided as to whether share prices are "fair value" or grossly over-priced, but hardly anyone is asserting that they are very under-priced. For what it is worth, my own judgement is that prices are indeed too high and that some sort of "adjustment", a weasel word for a fall, will take place by the end of next year. At some stage too, perhaps not for another couple of years, there will be another period of very slow growth, maybe another recession. But the big message carried in the stock market boom is that decent world-wide growth is surely with us.

If this is right, what are the consequences? Think back to the British housing market in the 1980s. Home ownership was climbing but the majority of people did not own their own homes and rented either from private landlords or from the council. The Tories had made it their aim to establish a nation of home-owners and gradually, year by year, the proportion of owner-occupiers climbed. Then came the successive house price booms, which handed wealth to the people who had got on the ladder early, but which also excluded the half of the population who at that stage still rented.

Strong share prices are good news in that they enable companies to raise new capital more cheaply. They are good news in that they reflect

a genuine improved performance by company managers. But, like rising house prices, they only bring direct benefit to people who are on the ladder, the "haves". This group of "haves" is larger than most people realise, for it includes not only the small group who own shares directly, but also those who have Peps and investment and unit trusts, plus anyone who has a pension invested in the stock market. But this whole group is only about half the country. It does not, for example, include the many people who keep their savings in a bank or building society and whose pension is not linked to the stock market. These people are like the renters of the 1980s: they face the same danger that they will lose out.

This pension point is important. This week the Labour leadership won the conference vote confirming the present government's policy of linking state pensions to prices and not to earnings. People pay their National Insurance all their lives, yet face the prospect of a pretty mean pension when they retire. They are not paying into a segregated pension fund, building up a stock of investments which rise in value. Instead they will simply rely on taxpayers in 2020 or 2030, or whenever they retire, to pay their pensions. They make a gigantic bet on the politics of a generation or more in the future: the willingness of the yet unborn to pay the tax to support an army of elderly people.

The parallel with housing is not exact but it is close enough to be useful. Politically, investors will become a powerful lobby, just like homeowners. Just as governments of both parties were loath to do anything which damaged the interests of owner-occupiers, so they will increasingly become cautious about doing anything that damages the interests of investors. More than that, they will need to increase the ranks of investors – or at least people whose pensions are invested in the market – to take pressure off the publicly financed pension system.

Socially, just as in housing, there is the danger of a growing chasm between the "haves" and the "have-nots", those who share in rising prosperity and those who do not. For the right, the response is clear: encourage the creation of a nation of shareholders, to follow the nation of homeowners; encourage more people to get onto the ladder even if the main beneficiaries are those already in it.

For the left, there is a dilemma: there are enormous economic and fiscal advantages in encouraging people to save and invest those savings in the stock market, for this supplies more money to industry and commerce and relieves pressure on taxpayers present and future. But there will always be some who cannot or will not save, and who the very idea of investing completely alien. They must be brought directly in.

Indirectly, they already are. For the market in shares serves two masters. There are those who invest, and reap the returns directly. But there are the rest of us, too; who can only prosper by being part of a successful global economy. And today's booming share prices are a celebration of the way the market system has burst out from the industrial world, across China and South-east Asia to parts of India and Latin America. And even, in a rough and ready way, in Russia and parts of Africa. Some day share prices will, of course, fall back; but the system marches on.

"It's all in the mind" lobby – claim our recovery shows the illness was just stress or emotional trauma that passed once we pulled ourselves together.

Desperate to leave all the limpness, and the fuzzy-headedness far behind and get on with our lives we never mention CFS again. After all, people will think we are bonkers, unstable, susceptible to relapse – or just deeply boring. The result is that the cynics and the chronic bog the airways.

So it's time to correct the balance. I was sent to see a specialist in chronic fatigue syndrome, Dr William Weir, a consultant physician at the Royal Free and Coppel's Wood Hospital in north London. According to Dr Weir, 80-90 per cent of people who get chronic fatigue syndrome recover within two years. Even those who remain ill for a long time still have a chance of making a full recovery. As Dr Weir points out, "I've seen people who've recovered after 10, 15 or even in one case 17 years."

In my case, the suffocating fatigue took three years finally to lift. Admittedly the first year was grim: nothing but Richard and Judy, the roliots of Ramsey Street and trashy magazines to fill my days. I couldn't walk as far as the tube station without crumbling from exhaustion, nor concentrate on anything more com-

Fergie, Mandy and Paula, we judge you

by Suzanne Moore



Forget the party conference talk of the decent society. It's open season on the intimate details of women's lives

and it is difficult to stand up for a woman who once wrote a book saying that women with children shouldn't work when she herself was flogging lingerie – she has always been passionate about her children. As Geldof wants to stand up for the rights of fathers, I trust he will also insist on their responsibilities otherwise the nanny might as well get custody.

One can't help feeling that this focus on who has the right to be a parent is a bizarre form of denial. A discussion of what constitutes good fathering might be more appropriate in the current climate yet there is no trace of it. A visitor to the planet this week might gain the impression that the only woman fit to be a mother is Mrs DB herself on the grounds that she was once happily married. A woman's ability to mother it appears can be impeded by having breast implants, by not living with the father of the children, by trying to make some money. Meanwhile treatment of the increasingly ridiculous Fergie has become gratuitous and sadistic. She should presumably not have a sex life. She should know that she can trust no one. She should not be honest. But whose shining example should she follow? Shagger Norris's perhaps? Should she go to Kevin Maxwell in order to find out how to appear credible?

There is open season on the intimate details of these women's lives, women who, whatever their faults, have not committed any terrible crimes. One could argue that through these stories we are able to address our anxieties about the complexities of modern life with its broken marriages, divorce, fertility problems and custody battles. Maybe there is some truth in this but our chief anxiety appears to rest on a very old-fashioned fear and loathing of woman. These women have made choices, some of them the wrong ones, and therefore must be tried in the court of public opinion. There is a fine line, it appears, between being punished for making the wrong choice and being pilloried for having a choice to make in the first place.

Fergie, Mandy, Paula – we are now on first-name terms with you largely because while taking your lives apart we can moralise about sex, drugs and dead babies. So rest assured, sleaze is not only the province of a few men in public life but can be found in the private lives of these distraught women. Read it and weep.



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Tired of all this miserable ME stuff



Yvette Cooper

The cynics call it yuppie flu, the long-term sufferers peddle doom and gloom. But you can have chronic fatigue syndrome and recover to see it as a normal illness

Aargh. Not another moaning article about ME. The Royal College of Physicians, Psychiatrists and General Practitioners produced a report this week about chronic fatigue syndrome (unhelpfully called ME or yuppie flu) showing that 1.25 per cent of the population are affected by it. And, as always, a report on chronic fatigue syndrome (CFS) acts as cue for another round of depressing arguments in the papers and on TV.

If it isn't some cynic sneering at "yuppie" malingerers, it's the dismal story of a sufferer condemned to year after dreary year of inactivity. But, don't worry, I promise the next 1,000 words will be a drone-free zone.

Here's some good news. Lots of people get CFS for months or for years, and they get better. And I mean properly better, not just well enough in drag themselves to work four days a week, or well enough to sit quietly in a corner at a party before catching an early bus home. They (or should I say we, for I confess I was once a sufferer) recover enough to be as bouncy and as boisterous as ever we were before we got ill.

The trouble is we rarely get a word in edgeways. To one side of us are the long-time persistent sufferers, their friends and their relatives, suggest we didn't really have CFS at all. The other – the

so-called "ME" lobby – claim our recovery shows the illness was just stress or emotional trauma that passed once we pulled ourselves together.

Desperate to leave all the limpness, and the fuzzy-headedness far behind and get on with our lives we never mention CFS again. After all, people will think we are bonkers, unstable, susceptible to relapse – or just deeply boring. The result is that the cynics and the chronic bog the airways.

So it's time to correct the balance. I was sent to see a specialist in chronic fatigue syndrome, Dr William Weir, a consultant physician at the Royal Free and Coppel's Wood Hospital in north London. According to Dr Weir, 80-90 per cent of people who get chronic fatigue syndrome recover within two years. Even those who remain ill for a long time still have a chance of making a full recovery. As Dr Weir points out, "I've seen people who've recovered after 10, 15 or even in one case 17 years."

In fact the evidence that chronic fatigue syndrome is completely distinct from depression is overwhelming. The brain scans of CFS sufferers and the depressed display very different patterns. Dr Weir believes that sooner or later scientists will discover a single common denominator for all cases of chronic fatigue syndrome, whether it lasts six months or six years: "It may well be a very common virus that affects lots of people, but doesn't cause illness in most of us."

The trouble is that until that virus – or whatever it is – is identified, people with CFS will continue to be told that their problems are psychological, and blamed for their inability to leap up and recover.

Not was my illness, as the cynics would like to suggest, merely a temporary mental aberration. If I was bonkers then, I am still bonkers now in my rude good health. Nothing has changed in my emotional state or my outlook on the world. I suffered no trauma, no unusual stress, and I wasn't depressed. At least I wasn't until I'd been ill for several months, when the full horror of incarceration with daytime television became clear. Misery took hold, I swallowed a few Prozac, and misery went away again. But I was still ill.

Unfortunately such gloom-mongering is counter-productive. A potentially sympathetic

audience is turned off by the portrayal of CFS sufferers as victims. What starts as pity for their terrible plight turns quickly to contempt and boredom.

More important, sufferers are made to feel even worse by the overwhelming impression that they have no hope of recovering. The most dispiriting thing I did when I first fell ill was open a self-help book on ME. Within three pages, I was convinced my illness would last forever. Luckily, I had doctors and family who treated CFS as an ordinary, if unpleasant, illness, from which I would naturally recover.

I don't feel like a victim for having had chronic fatigue syndrome. I never did at the time either. Infuriatingly for others, I actually feel quite proud of the fact that I endured an extremely boring and frustrating few years without going completely crazy.

Nor, sadly, can I say with my band on my heart that I became a better person because of CFS. For a few months when I first got back to health I rejoiced in silly things like riding a bike, I enjoyed the world, and I felt great empathy with the elderly, the heavily pregnant, the disabled, and anyone who had trouble moving fast. Now I tend to take everything for granted again – just like everyone else.

I feel normal again. We should start treating CFS as a normal illness.

Spottiswoode attacks British Gas 'machine'

MICHAEL HARRISON

Clare Spottiswoode, the gas industry regulator, yesterday launched an astonishing attack on British Gas, accusing the company of attempting to undermine her as part of an orchestrated campaign to fight price controls on its pipeline business, TransCo.

Ms Spottiswoode, the director general of gas supply, said she had heard that the British Gas board, led by chairman Richard Giordano, had commissioned a "psychological profile of her as part of the campaign". Ms Spottiswoode also referred by name to one of British Gas's public relations advisers, Angus Maitland.

The outburst against British Gas and its "huge machine" came as the company rejected the TransCo price controls as "unjustified and unworkable" and announced it was taking its case to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission.

Ms Spottiswoode has been at loggerheads with the company for the past three months since it described her proposals as "the biggest smash-and-grab raid" in corporate history. They would cut £28 off the average bill but reduce TransCo's revenues by £65m a year and,

according to the company, put 10,000 jobs and the integrity of the gas system at risk.

Yesterday Ms Spottiswoode said: "They have a huge machine, they have their lobbyists, their advisers, their Angus Maitlands of this world. We do not have the resources to get into this."

British Gas seemed to think, she said, that its "huge publicity campaign will affect what we think, of what the MMC panel think". But, she said, its tactics would prove counter-productive.

She said British Gas had had a "pretty vitriolic" relationship with her predecessor at Ofgas, James MacKinnon, and that its behaviour was "just in character" now. "To lose one regulatory relationship is bad news," she said. "To lose two is extremely bad news."

Last night the company rejected the criticisms. Philip Rogerson, British Gas's deputy chairman, said: "I was both saddened and surprised to hear comments. We have studiously ensured that we have focused on the issues. We have deliberately not focused on personalities because that would be wholly inappropriate."

Mr Rogerson added that he was "astonished" to hear it had ordered a psychological profile

of Ms Spottiswoode. "I have absolutely no knowledge of any such profile being carried out."

Mr Maitland, who runs the Maitland Consultancy and also gives British Telecom and the National Grid PR advice on relationships with their regulators, said Ms Spottiswoode's comments were a mystery.

"This campaign has been fought on the issues. I have never spoken to any journalists about Clare Spottiswoode herself. I have concentrated on the issues. If anyone has been manipulating the campaign, it is not us."

During his price review of BT, the industry regulator, Don Cruickshank, is understood to have been concerned that a regulatory relationship is bad news," she said. "To lose two is extremely bad news."

Ms Spottiswoode and her advisers have been the subject of some personalised critiques. Last weekend, one Sunday newspaper wrote how Ms Spottiswoode had been elevated into her job from "a small and not particularly successful service consultancy" and was part of a network of academics and regulators who belonged to Hayek's so-called "Austrian" school of economics linked with Birmingham University.

The MMC inquiry into



At loggerheads: Clare Spottiswoode, gas industry regulator, and Richard Giordano, chairman of British Gas

TransCo is expected to last at least six months. However, Mr Rogerson said this would have no effect on the plan to demerge British Gas's trading arm from

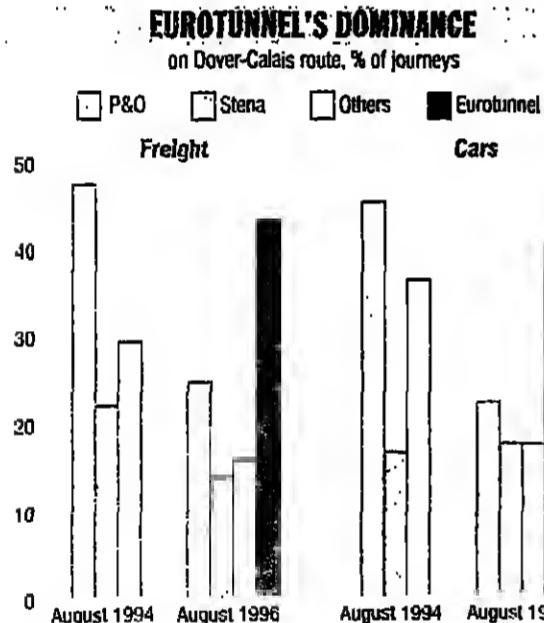
TransCo by spring next year. Decisions on future dividend policy, he said, could only be made once the outcome of the MMC inquiry was known.

Analysts calculate that the payout would have to be trimmed by at least 10 per cent if the Ofgas proposals are implemented.

British Gas said that, on asset valuation and depreciation, Ms Spottiswoode had ignored earlier MMC rulings.

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P&O and Stena combine forces to take on the Tunnel



MAGNUS GRIMOND

Lord Sterling, chairman of P&O, yesterday predicted big job cuts but no price rises on cross-Channel routes after agreeing a £10m merger of its Dover-to-Calais ferry business with the rival operation run by Stena of Sweden.

The deal, which brings together the biggest and second-biggest ferry operators on the busiest part of the Channel, is the most dramatic move yet by ferry companies to combat the price war sparked off by the opening of the Channel Tunnel. Prices have fallen by up to half over the past three years.

The deal was well received in the City and by rivals yesterday, with P&O's shares rising 10p to 645p. It is the latest in a string of deals by the shipping-to-construction group to revitalise

its image among investors. Last month it announced a £2.6bn merger of its container interests with Royal Ncdloyd of the Netherlands, followed by a £2.5m deal to buy out Royal Nedlloyd's half share in the North Sea Ferries joint venture.

Lord Sterling described the acquisition as "the very first step" in the rationalisation of the cross-Channel ferry industry, triggered by the Government's decision in July to lift restrictions on mergers and collaboration.

Yesterday he said the new merged business, to be called P&O Stena Line, would aim to achieve cost savings of £75m by the end of next year. A substantial part of that will come from withdrawing ships plying the so-called short sea routes, which include Dover to Zeebrugge and Dover to Calais.

Stena's Invia and P&O's *Pride of Bruges* were taken out of service, leading to between 350 and 400 redundancies. Estimated cost savings are around £15m per ship.

Further withdrawals will be made next year. Although neither side would be drawn on numbers, Lord Sterling said the combined fleet would not be cut "dramatically" and one estimate suggested another one or two ships were earmarked to go.

Before the reductions, P&O will contribute its eight ships on the route to the new venture and Stena the five it operates. P&O will own 60 per cent of the share in the venture, but have just 51 per cent of the votes.

Job cuts from the combined workforce of 5,500 on the short sea routes could exceed 1,000. Lord Sterling said he would be "surprised" to see fewer than

that number of redundancies, following cost savings in marketing, port operations and administration. Stena said its headquarters in Ashford, Kent, which employs 450 people, would have to be reduced in size, although some staff would move to Dover, where the new line's head office would be based.

Lord Sterling had some comfort too for ferry travellers, suggesting there would be "no change to prices" as a result of the deal and promising that P&O would remain a low-price operator. It would be "quite ridiculous to assume that there would be any increases at all," he claimed.

The merger must be cleared by the Office of Fair Trading, which could trigger a monopoly investigation, but cross-Channel rivals generally

welcomed news of the link-up yesterday. Eurotunnel, the Channel Tunnel operator, said the rationalisation of capacity was "a logical step which should have been done earlier". Graham Edge, managing director of HoverSpeed, said: "I might get some commonsense back into the industry." William Gibson of the Passenger Shipping Association said it would bring stability into what was a very disordered situation.

The merger is expected to boost the profitability of P&O's ferry operations, which saw profits crash from £24.5m to just £500,000 in the first half of this year. David Elstone of Kleinwort Benson Securities expected losses at P&O European Ferries to deepen to nearly £10m in the second half, but could see profits of £50m next year.

Comment, page 21

Even the bulls take a cautious view of Footsie

DIANE COYLE

Economics Editor

With the poetry of round numbers, the FTSE 100 index ended yesterday at exactly 4,000, 15 points lower than Wednesday's record. Experts are divided about whether shares stand teetering on the brink of a big correction from that symbolic level or are simply pausing before surging to new highs.

The common ground is that the most recent gains in share prices in London and New York are due to the Federal Reserve's surprise decision not to increase US interest rates last week. Uncertainty about when that move will take place is what divides the bulls and bears.

Nick Knight, equity strategist at Nomura, said today's jobs and earnings figures for the US would be decisive in the short term. "We're in for a big move. Next week the index will be at least a hundred points from the current level, in one direction or the other."

If the increase in the second quarter of the year, nearly

twice as much as they invested in UK equities.

For all their talk, even the bulls are cautious, their forecasts for the FTSE index at the end of this year ranging from 3,750 to 4,200, compared to a range of 3,600 to 3,700.

The optimists admit there are risks. One is the possibility of higher taxes on the corporate sector either in next month's Budget or after the election.

Another is the danger that a new row over Europe would halt the gains made by underpinning share prices during the past week. The spread between 10-year yields on gilts and German government bonds has narrowed from 180 to 155 basis points.

This element of political risk in the UK could go the other way. Richard Kersley at BZW described it as one of the reasons that there will be a strong flow of liquidity into equities. Recent official figures show that institutions put an extra £4.3bn into cash in the second quarter of the year, nearly

Philip Isherwood: Kleinwort Benson
Any unchartered territory feels dangerous. In short term there will be a temptation to take profits. But institutions have built up their cash holdings and will have to start coming back into the market.

Richard Davidson: Morgan Stanley
There are reasons for weakness in the short term but I'm still a bull over the next year. Any commitment from Labour to joining the single currency would be very optimistic because it would lower UK bond yields.

Richard Kersley: BZW
Institutions have a strong cash position, and it is difficult to justify not reinvesting that. Gilt yields have also started to catch up to other European markets, which is providing strong backing for equities.

BULLS AND BEARS SQUARE UP IN THE CITY

Nick Knight: Kleinwort Benson
In the UK the story is jam today, jam tomorrow. The economy will be burning up after the election, inflation will deteriorate and we'll get higher interest rates.

Bob Sample: NatWest Markets
The political cycle means I'd be reluctant to close the market any higher. There is a lot to worry about this side of the election even though Labour will probably be fairly responsible.

Mark Brown: Hoare Govett
What has been driving the market is good, old-fashioned cheap money. The free lunch will come to an end when interest rates go up, when we do get some signs of inflationary pressure. So far there hasn't been much sign of it.

Hamleys head quits six months into the job

MAGNUS GRIMOND

Hamleys, owner of the famous toyshop in London's Regent Street, saw its shares dip yesterday after announcing the departure of Geoffrey Cullinan, who only became chief executive six months ago.

Mr Cullinan, who is expected to receive a payoff in the region of £100,000, was appointed in March having helped found his own management consultancy firm, OGC Strategy Consultants. Howard Dyer, chairman, denied that there had been any personality clashes with the rest of the board. "In my view, it was the transition from consultancy to operations which didn't suit him."

The news sent shares in the group down 5p to 365.5p, despite the announcement of an 18 per cent rise in half-year profits to £1.98m.

Mr Dyer said the board had decided to appoint Mr Cullinan earlier in the year to give strategic direction to the group and complement the operational strengths of Stephen Woodbridge, managing director. "I like him. He's a good man and he's an interesting man. But both the company and he decided it wasn't the right appointment and he resigned. The company will be paying compensation, but he will continue to help with a number of development projects under way," Mr Dyer said.

Hamleys said profits at its main Regent Street store had grown 17 per cent in the half year to July, despite the impact on tourist numbers of the IRA bombing campaign and Tube strikes in the capital.

Investment column, page 21

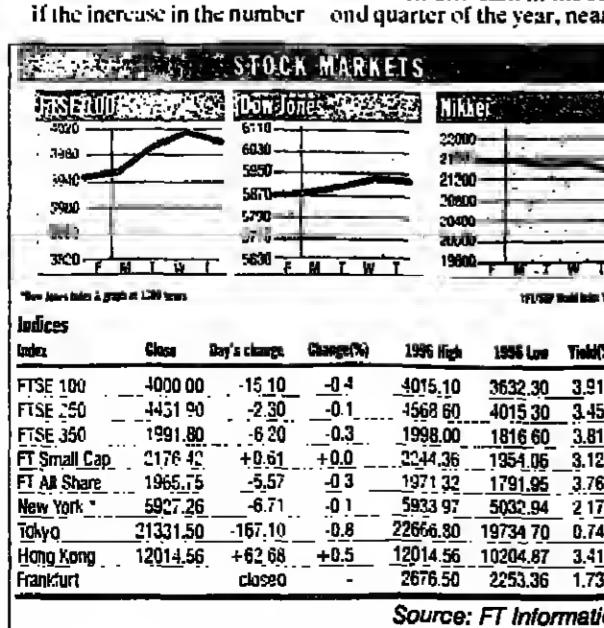


Geoffrey Cullinan: 'Move to operations didn't suit him'

"There was no reason to be worried from Hamleys' point of view". All the directors led by Mr Dyer, who helped revitalise the group after losses in the early 1990s, remained aboard, he said.

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Source: FT Information

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Littlewoods set for shake-up

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CITY & BUSINESS EDITOR: JEREMY WARNER

Grid told to reduce its prices by 20%

MICHAEL HARRISON

The National Grid was contemplating last night whether to follow the lead of British Gas and go to the MMC after its regulator, Professor Stephen Littlechild, announced price controls which, though softened slightly, will still remove £1bn in revenues over the next four years.

The company has until the end of this month to decide whether to accept the proposals, which would cut £4 off the average electricity bill by requiring the Grid to reduce prices by 20 per cent next year and by 4 per cent in the following three.

Prof Littlechild said his final set of proposals were "tough but realistic", representing a "reasonable balance" between shareholders and customers. The regulator has relaxed the formula compared with its initial proposals in August so that the Grid will have to achieve a 4 per cent annual improvement

Public loses faith as utility regulators flounder


COMMENT

These companies were not privatised to be run as consumer co-operatives. Investors bought them in good faith, believing in the sanctity of a regulatory contract which appears to have been thrown to the winds'

Another day, another row over utility regulation – or rather, two of them. Yesterday we had British Gas flouncing off to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission in protest at Clare Spottiswoode's proposed price controls. With Professor Stephen Littlechild refusing to compromise his proposed controls to any significant degree, the National Grid could soon follow suit.

Plainly there is something wrong with utility regulation that it could produce such spectacular, damaging and explosive argument. If Ms Spottiswoode is right about British Gas, that it has been conducting a carefully orchestrated dirty tricks campaign to undermine her credibility and standing, then this is not an acceptable state of affairs in a mature democracy. Certainly the allegations demand public investigation.

By the same token, if British Gas is right about the degree to which the regulator has been trying to meddle in its affairs, a degree according to British Gas which is tantamount to attempting to run the company, then this is equally unacceptable. These companies were not privatised to be run as customer co-operatives. Investors bought them in good faith, believing in the sanctity of a regulatory contract which appears to have been thrown to the winds.

Price regulation is accused of being too lax on the one hand and too harsh on the other. It is hardly surprising that both the public and the City are losing all faith in it. Meanwhile the regulators are left floundering

around, attempting to match each other with ever greater displays of regulatory machismo. Prof Littlechild was undoubtedly influenced by the example set by his counterpart at Ofgem in what he did yesterday. Unless of course it is sheer coincidence that both the Grid and TransCo have been instructed to make a one-off cut in charges of 20 per cent followed by virtually identical real price reductions in subsequent years.

Unless there is a radical change of heart some interesting mental gymnastics at the Grid, it looks to be heading the same way as British Gas to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission. Ms Spottiswoode massaged her final proposals so as to appear to have given ground but kidding no-one, least of all British Gas, that she had compromised in any significant fashion. Likewise the concessions put forward yesterday by Prof Littlechild amount to relatively little. He is offering to relax the efficiency targets the Grid must meet and allow it a rate of return in the middle of the range in a slightly bigger asset base.

It shouldn't be happening that these regulatory reviews are ending with the MMC. That they are is indicative of a failure in the system. The sooner utility regulation is overhauled to make it more accountable, transparent, and professional, the better. The present set-up seems to be pretty much on its last legs. The next Government should make reform a matter of urgency.

Ferry merger will bring back real competition

It is not often that a newspaper like the *Independent*, which believes in the principles of the free market and open competition, finds itself in support of a merger that will reduce competition, cost jobs and lead to higher prices for the consumer, but the P&O/Stena link-up announced yesterday may be one of those rare cases. Certainly Lord Sterling, chairman of P&O, puts a compelling case for it, even if he does overegg the argument a bit. Ever since the Channel tunnel was first sanctioned by the British and French governments, it was inevitable that one day this would happen.

When Eurotunnel was raising finance for *le grandiose* project, it came out with some wildly overoptimistic forecasts of cross-Channel traffic and tariffs to further its cause and persuade investors, bankers and politicians that the tunnel could co-exist perfectly happily with the ferry operators. They were, of course, never any more than self-serving nonsense. No industry could ever hope to add on such a vast chunk of capacity and expect the market to grow large enough overnight to fill it. The reality was always likely to be a vicious price war, with all the usual fall-out from such fights.

By merging, what the two ferry operators are in essence doing is returning the position commercially to where it was before the

tunnel arrived. In the past, there were two main ferry operators on the chief Anglo-French trunk routes, plus a number of smaller operators. The tunnel increased the number of competitors to three. The merger will reduce them to two once more, with the also-rans following up in the rear. The fact that Eurotunnel is privately run by the authorities to agree on this merger would in normal circumstances be a reason for the utmost suspicion. The dangers of a cosy duopoly developing are all too real. But the fact of the matter is that for the time being there is far too much capacity on these routes and as a consequence everyone involved is bleeding to death.

The idea, seriously advanced in support of this merger, that it will create a powerful new competitor for the tunnel is largely tosh. This merger is not about creating more competition; it is about reducing it and increasing prices. But for a change, these unworthy ends seem largely justified. The alternative is death by a thousand knives for most of the ferry operators and an eventual near monopoly for the tunnel.

Proposals compare with last decade's Big Bang

Sometimes it is all too easy in analysing City matters to miss the wood for the trees. This seems to be true of the Stock Exchange's new automated trading system, which will be

in operation late next year. Debate over the Stock Exchange's future has been clouded and obscured by a seemingly endless series of technical rows over price disclosure rules, the stamp duty regime, and other points of detail. But the really important part seems largely to have been missed. Standing back from it all, what has actually emerged is a surprisingly radical set of proposals that bear some comparison with those introduced at Big Bang a decade ago this month.

From late next year, there will be no market makers in FTSE 100 stocks; trades will be executed automatically on the computerised order book. Really large trades will still be carried out away from the order book, but once completed their prices will be published. When the big securities firms deal in the FTSE 100 stocks that make up two thirds of the £1.5bn-£2bn daily market volume, their only protection will be the size of their capital and their trading skills, not the special *market making privileges* which are at present built into the rulebooks.

There will be nothing to stop any other exchange members competing with them on equal terms. It has taken a long time for the stock market to start practising the free market principles it so likes to champion for others, but finally we seem to be getting there. Michael Lawrence, unceremoniously sacked by the market's big battalions for the high-handed way he attempted to reform the trading system, is entitled to feel at least a little pleased at the revolution he fomented.

Ross plans board restructuring at Littlewoods group

NIGEL COPE



James Ross: Plans three categories of director

James Ross, the new chairman of the Littlewoods retail and football pools group, is planning a big shake-up of the company's board structure which could see the last remaining members of the controlling Moores family leave the board.

Mr Ross, who joined from Cable & Wireless in May, said the changes would be made in the next few months. They will include the creation of three categories of director: executive; non-executive; and link directors.

This last group will be responsible for communicating information between the board and the 32 members of the Moores family which control the Liverpool-based company. He said they would "not necessarily" be members of the family, who would have to compete for places against external candidates.

After the recent retirement of John Moores there are two members of the family on the board. They are Lady Granchester, the eldest daughter of the Littlewoods founder, the late Sir John Moores, and her son James Sturton-Taylor.

Mr Ross is confident that the changes can be achieved with

"If you strip out inflation, this company's results have stagnated for almost a decade. The attraction for me is to take a company with latent potential and in a period of three to five years really get it moving."

Mr Ross also heralded a new spirit of openness within the company. It met City analysts for the first time yesterday, though denied this was a prelude to a float. Yesterday's results for the six months to 30 June was its first ever interim results statement.

Mr Ross denied the company was seeking to behave like a public company. "We are trying to behave like a well-managed company." He also pledged to be more open with all the company's stakeholders including suppliers, joint venture partners and potential new employees.

In the six months to June, Littlewoods' pre-tax profits fell 24 per cent to £12.5m. Group sales fell by 5 per cent to £995m. In the retail business, which includes the chain stores, sales improved by 7 per cent with the bottom line turning from the previous year's £4m loss to a £4m profit. Sales at the football pools business fell by 29 per cent to £245m. But profits improved by 6.5 per cent to £11.5m.

IN THIS WEEKEND'S INDEPENDENT ON SUNDAY

IN THE SUNDAY REVIEW

Fish are the most underrated, and the most versatile, of culinary delights. They're also flavour of the month at smart tables. Don't miss Michael Bateman's three-part guide to the New Wave of piscine cuisine

and in real life

Dressed for success, but who's impressed? Louise Chung on the British working wardrobe. Plus: the Saffy Syndrome – are your parents so hip it hurts?

In 1995, LG's annual sales grew 40% to over US\$64 billion.



It's nice to meet you.



It's Matt Ryan's job to listen.

As a Senior Designer at LG Electronics Design-Tech, Matt must intimately understand the different aesthetics of each European country. And then translate that understanding into intelligently designed TVs, VCRs, microwaves and other products. (Matt and his colleagues even helped design their company's Red Oak House headquarters.)

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business

Hamleys' satellite stores take off

THE INVESTMENT COLUMN

EDITED BY TOM STEVENSON

Hamleys' announcement that it is parting company with chief executive Geoffrey Cullinan after just six months took the shine off another cracking set of results from the toyshop group. The departure will scratch the reputation of chairman Howard Dyer a little, as yesterday's 7p dip in the shares to 365.5p reflects. But it is undoubtedly right to cut his losses early with a manager who, it appears, could not make the transition from consultancy to hands-on management. Whatever lies behind this split at the top, the original team which has overseen a near-doubling of the share price since flotation in May 1994 remains intact.

In the first six months to 27 July, they have overseen an 18 per cent rise in pre-tax profits to £1.98m. The successful formula being rolled out by Mr Dyer and his colleagues has been to use the famous store in London's Regent Street as a basis for "satellite" operations at main tourist entry points, such as Heathrow's Terminal 4 and the Channel Tunnel. It is a strategy belatedly being followed by Liberty, Hamleys' Regent Street neighbour.

The modest 4 per cent growth in sales in the period reflects the absence this time of shipments of "Skyflyers" packs, the children's presents which Hamleys supplies to British Airways for distribution to its passengers. Any problems with this three-year contract appear to be on BA's side and the rest of the business seems to be storming ahead in what is the seasonally weaker half.

The powerhouse remains Regent Street, which accounts for close to three-quarters of group turnover and is highly operationally geared, with operating margins of over 50 per cent. Regent Street raised profits 17 per cent on a sales increase of just 5.5 per cent, shrugging off a 23 per cent rise in rent, terrorist bombs and tube strikes.

The House of Toys chain of toyshop concessions remains a longer-term prospect. The business just about broke-even in the first half, but full-year profits should easily get into six figures. The group is breaking out of its base within House of Fraser stores, with a 4,000 foot John Menzies concession in Edinburgh's Princes Street and another in Arnotts in Dublin after Christmas.

But the real excitement lies in the newer operations. The two satellites opened last year at the Channel Tunnel and at Schiphol Airport in Holland saw sales rises of between 23 per cent and 159 per cent. Singapore Airport, a joint venture with a Swiss company, is already going well and a larger franchised store due to start next year in Saudi Arabia could be the prototype for similar stores in the Far East by 1998/99.

With minimal costs for these developments, cash will continue to pile up. Hamleys will look for acquisitions or hand some money back to shareholders. Profits could hit £7.5m this year, to give a prospective p/e of 17. A firm hold.

Nothing virtual about this drop

One of the dilemmas facing investors these days is that companies cashing in on the dramatic technological changes sweeping the world are almost by definition some of the market's riskiest investments. Shareholders in Virtuality, including those who stumped up for a placing at 280p earlier this year, had a harsh awakening to this fact yesterday after the virtual reality specialist's shares collapsed by a third to 140p.

After coming to the market three years ago at 170p, they have enjoyed a roller-coaster ride as early bid speculation was replaced by the far-from-virtual reality of profits warnings, slumping sales and rapidly reinforced brokers' forecasts.

Half-year figures to June revealed a

much worse-than-expected loss of £3.78m, compared to last year's interim deficit of £583,000 after sales fell from £6.27m to £3.54m. There was a loss per share of 13.4p (loss of 2.2p).

Virtuality is passing through a difficult transition year as it lessens its dependence on arcade entertainment equipment and moves into lower-ticket home entertainment virtual reality headsets. At the same time it is transforming itself from a designer and manufacturer of equipment to a licensor of intellectual property.

With the technology of graphics moving so quickly and the cost and power of rival products moving against the company, there is an awful lot going on at the same time. Just when Virtuality needed a bit of stability from its core games business to tide it over the transition, the cycle swing sharply against it.

As a result, the handful of analysts who follow the company were busier yesterday with their red pens and expectations of the full-year loss ranged from 3.5m to 6.6m. If that seems like a big range, it is because no one really has a clue what is in store. Next year, brokers think sales of a new headset product in Japan will result in profits

of anywhere between £400,000 and £2m.

As the basis for an investment it is all pretty unsatisfactory and Virtuality shares should remain the preserve of people closer to this fast-changing industry than the average investor or gambler on one of the business's larger players snapping the company up for its technical know-how. Even after the large fall yesterday great caution is recommended.

Oriental looks mouthwatering

Cynics would argue that massive first-day gains on small new issues are among the most reliable signs of the top of a bull market. For the increasing numbers of bears fretting about the state of the market, the big jumps on first dealings in Ultra Electronics and Oriental Restaurants would have served as bright red, flashing, warning lights.

Of the two, the jump at Oriental looks the more intriguing as this is a company in its infancy, running only four restaurants although with ambitious plans to roll its Thai and Chinese outlets across London and then to the provinces. The shares, placed at 15.4p, cleared 200p before settling to a still-impressive 188p.

Established in 1988 under the Business Expansion Scheme, the company has been a fantastic investment for the handful of City investors who used the generous tax relief of the BES to put in as little as 4p a share eight years ago. Their bunch that there would be demand for relatively upmarket oriental restaurants in the City and West End proved correct and the Sri Siam, Sri City and Imperial City venues are among the most popular lunching spots in the square mile.

Recent estimates have put growth in the eating out market in the UK at 7 per cent a year for the foreseeable future and the ethnic food part of that market is growing even faster. Thai cuisine is the fastest sub-sector of all, so Oriental ought to be looking forward to some pretty mouthwatering growth.

The recent history is impressive. Operating profits in 1994 of £456,000 grew to £729,000 in the year to March 1995 and in the latest period had grown again to £966,000. It is little wonder that the company has decided to pay Hock Ann Chua, its managing director, £320,000 to cap his performance-related bonus.

On the basis of an expected 25 per cent growth in pre-tax profits for the year to March, the shares trade on a prospective p/e ratio of about 17. The shares will hold onto their early gain.

Problems with planes hit profits at Inspirations

TOM STEVENSON
City Editor

Inspirations, one of Britain's leading tour operators, stunned the City yesterday with a warning that it would do no better than break even in the year to September just finished, compared with analysts' expectations of a £7.7m profit. Shares in the travel group slumped 14p to 86.5p.

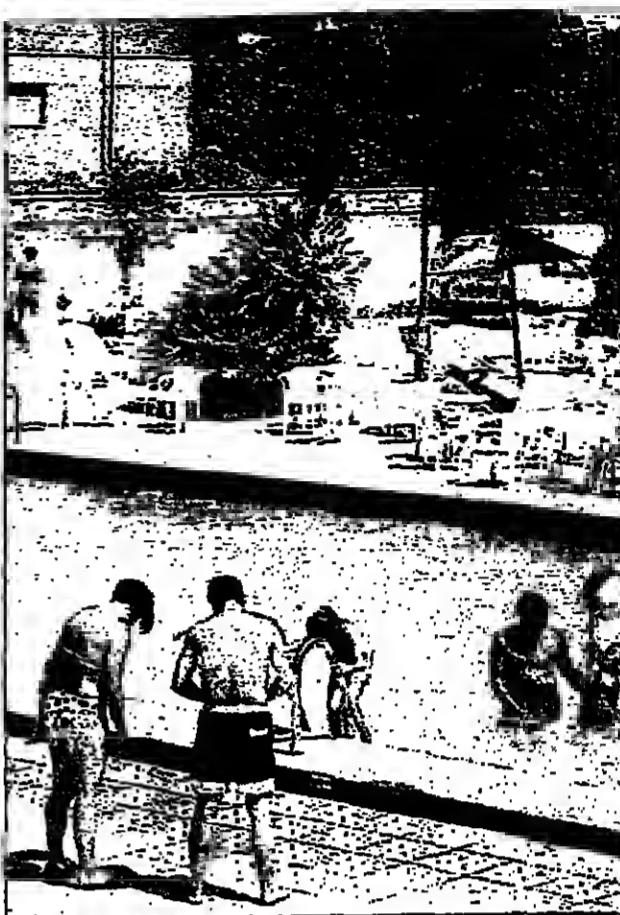
The company is in dispute with British Airways, from which it bought Caledonian Airways two years ago, over a service contract with the airline which Inspirations blamed for delays to its holidays during the peak summer months.

Following the sale of Caledonian, BA retained the contract to service the planes for Inspirations. Inspirations said that "on numerous occasions throughout the peak season we suffered from serviceable aircraft being delivered late from our engineering contractor".

To alleviate the delays Inspirations was forced to charter at least one extra plane. It has also been faced with the cost of compensating disgruntled passengers and has subsequently suffered lower demand and a hit to its credibility. A television documentary in early September made explicit reference to delays on Caledonian which further depressed demand.

Inspirations said it was not yet possible to quantify the net cost of the maintenance schedule problems, which would depend on how much the company could recover from BA. Analysts said any recovery would be too late for the year to September. BA and Inspirations are understood to be trying to sort out their differences amicably.

Vic Fatah, chief executive, said Caledonian was a significant customer for BA's maintenance arm and it had been able to renegotiate the agreement on much more favourable



Holiday hopes: Summer 1997 bookings are well ahead

terms. "These arrangements have been designed to avoid a repeat of the problems experienced in summer 1996," he said.

News of the exceptional hit to profits marred an otherwise buoyant trading statement which confirmed that following the overcapacity of 1995, supply and demand had moved much better into balance for the holiday industry in 1996.

Inspirations also said its winter bookings were running 72 per cent up on last year and bookings for summer 1997 were also well ahead.

The warning from Inspirations is the latest blow to an industry already under the cloud of an Office of Fair Trading investigation into its vertically integrated operations. It has been argued tour operators use their ownership of chains of travel agents to distort competition. A judgement from the OFT is expected imminently.

The investigation by the OFT is its second in as many years and reflects concerns that customers are not being made aware of the links between agents and operators. Thomson and Airtours own Lunn Poly and Going Places, while Inspirations has a joint venture with AT May.

Dividend suspended at MDIS

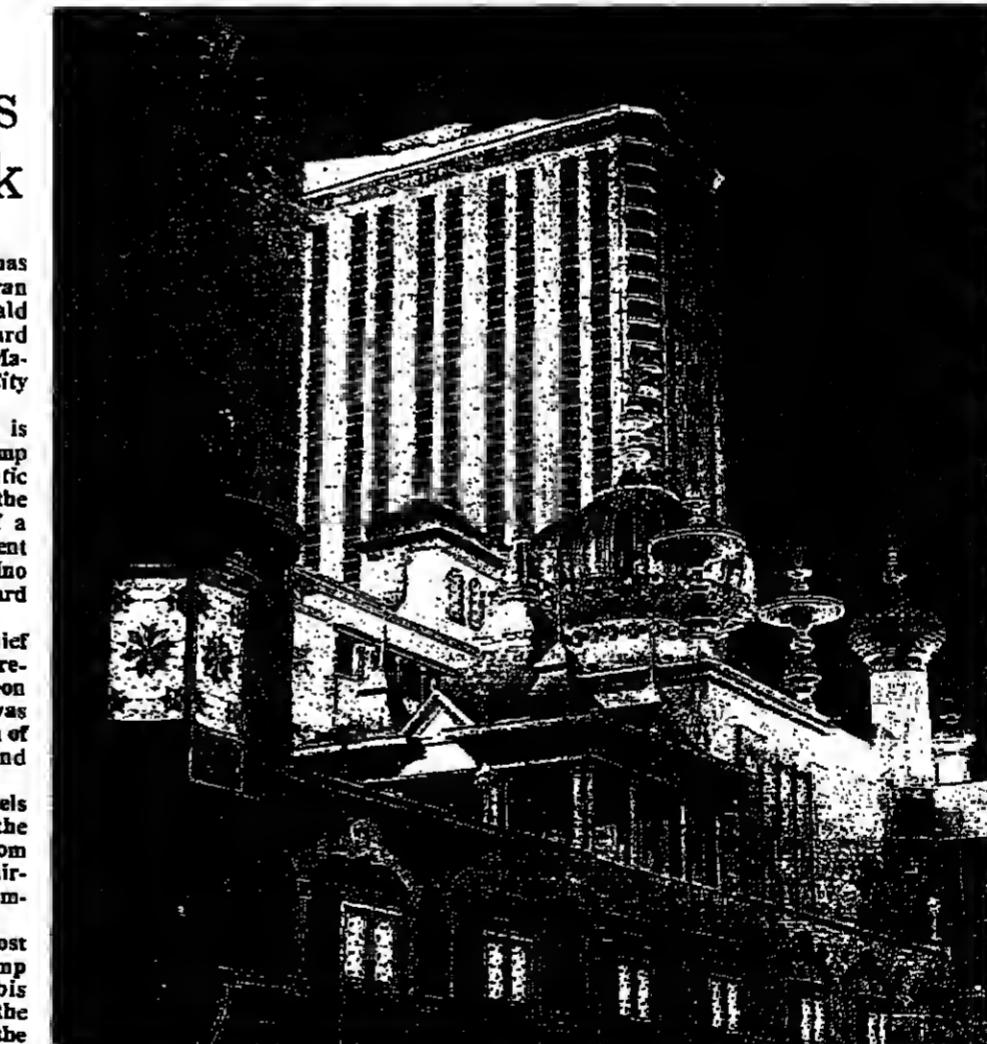
JILL TREANOR

Investors in the troubled McDonnell Douglas Information Systems company were dealt another blow yesterday, as the shares dived 7p to 54p on worse-than-expected half-year losses of £9.4m and news that the interim dividend was being scrapped.

The computer services firm also warned that it did not expect the previously announced restructuring of its operations to yield any benefits until 1997. MDIS has made several profit warnings since its shares were floated at 260p each on the stock market in March 1994. The latest results compare with a £1.67m profit in the first-half of last year. Half-year turnover fell from £79m to £60.5m, in part reflecting the disposal of non-core businesses last year.

"The directors planned for 1996 to be a turnaround year leading to scope for improved financial performance in 1997 and subsequent years," a MDIS spokesman said yesterday.

He added, "In the short term, trading conditions continue to be difficult and the benefits of the restructuring are unlikely to be evident until 1997."



Trump casino gets Hard Rock

Rank said yesterday it has teamed up with American property developer Donald Trump to open its 61st Hard Rock restaurant at the Taj Mahal casino in Atlantic City (right).

A similar arrangement is also planned at the Trump Castle Hotel, also in Atlantic City. The talks include the possible construction of a Hard Rock Live entertainment venue and "other non-casino operations within a total Hard Rock-themed facility".

Andrew Teare, new chief executive of Rank, said recently the Butlin's Odeon cinemas leisure group was planning a rapid expansion of the Hard Rock brand around the world.

On Monday, Trump Hotels shareholders approved the acquisition of the Castle from Donald Trump, who is chairman of the publicly-held company.

Mr Trump, owner of almost 40 per cent of the Trump Hotels, did not vote his shares, and 82 per cent of the votes cast were in favour of the \$480m acquisition, he said.

Year to prepare for order-driven trades

PETER RODGERS
Financial Editor

A new computerised system for trading the FTSE 100 stocks would not be introduced for at least another year, the Stock Exchange said yesterday.

The Exchange has decided to give member firms the time they wanted to prepare for the introduction of the new system. Member firms had prepared for a minimum of nine months, and possibly as much as a year, to get the system up and running.

The new "order-driven" system will be a radical departure from the present trading methods, introduced exactly 10 years ago, under which market makers offer competing quotations. Instead it will execute trades automatically once they have been input to the computer system.

As part of the changes, the Exchange has decided to abolish the 10-year-old distinction between market makers and

other Stock Exchange firms, which it had hoped would continue.

The end of the market makers' privileges was inevitable following a decision by the Chancellor in the summer to extend stamp duty relief to all firms that hold blocks of shares during trading, as long as they are members of a recognised investment exchange.

The decision made redundant an earlier Exchange proposal for the market makers to continue under another name - registered principal traders - who would have had a monopoly on the relief.

The Chancellor's tax changes may also lead to a big expansion of stock borrowing, hitherto the preserve of the market makers. In the new system, any firm with enough capital to satisfy the regulator will be allowed tax relief on borrowed stock, which will allow them to speculate by taking short positions.



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15 YEARS' EXPERIENCE SETS US A WORLD APART

50 من الأصل

Dettori unstoppable as he brings home Bounty

Racing

SUE MONTGOMERY
reports from Newmarket

The margin between getting it very right or very wrong is thin in race-riding, but Frankie Dettori, who can clearly walk on water, added the ability to part the waves to his repertoire here yesterday. The man of the moment found himself trapped on the rails behind a wall of horses with a double handful on the favourite, Bahamian Bounty, in the feature race, the Middle Park Stakes, with a quarter of a mile to go. Then, as if by divine command, a gap opened up in front of him and neither horse nor jockey needed a second bidding to grab the slice of luck.

Bahamian Bounty dived through and flashed past those nearest to him, Easycare and Rich Ground, in a matter of strides. Almost simultaneously Richard Hughes found daylight on Muchea, the centre of the pack and with the pair thundering wide of each other the hill Dettori had to work hard to keep Bahamian Bounty going, for the big, lazy colt has a tendency to idle in front once

his job appears done, and with no close competitor, if did. But when Dettori insisted he responded well to get back in front, and the head winning distance was in his favour.

The relieved jockey admitted: "I have in say I was a bit worried a furlong and a half out. But Pat's horse [Easycall] came off the rails for a stride, and he just wooshed through. He has a tremendous high cruising speed and a terrific turn of foot, but if he has a fault it is that he stops in front, and that gave the other horse the chance to get back at him."

The chestnut son of Cadeaux Generoux, now a dual Group One winner after his Prix Morny victory in August, is

likely to go for the three-timer in the Dewhurst Stakes over an extra furlong back at Newmarket later this month. The final decision will rest with his new owner Maktoom Al Maktoum, but his trainer, David Loder, is keen on the idea: "He's fresh

stage of his career, and I would even see him as a Guineas horse."

The bookmakers view, however, seems to be that Bahamian Bounty would not get a mile in a horsebox, for he remains at around 25-1 for the 1997 Classic.

The colt was Loder's first runner for the senior Dubai breeder, who has an estimated £1m for him two days ago — a fair return on the 45,000 guineas laid out by his erstwhile owner, the Lucayan Stud, at the Fonthill Sales a year ago — but whether or not he will be prepared for the Guineas in Newmarket or Dubai remains to be seen.

Dettori said: "I'm delighted at the prospect and very proud that they have asked me. They didn't give me a reason as why they turned me down last time, but they didn't have to. But I was only 21, very young, and had rather lost my way at the

time. But that is all history now."

The jockey's next Group One opportunities come at Longchamp this weekend. His Arc mount, Classic Cliche, doubtful earlier in the week after a few off-colour days, was confirmed as a runner after a sparkling six-furlong spurt with Halling on the Linkeimes, Simon Crisford, the Godolphin racing manager, said: "He seems back to his old self. The ground [good to soft] will suit him well, as it will put the emphasis on stamina, and he is a tough horse who will be able to cope with a rough race."

The Gold Cup winner has been re-introduced into the Arc betting as the best British hope, behind Heliosis, Swain, Zagreb and Durazari, but his baby sister My Emma, winner of the Prix Vermeille, will miss the big race after her connections decided against supplementing her yesterday morning. Willie Carson, badly injured when he was kicked at Newbury two weeks ago today, has "made excellent progress", according to his surgeon, and has been released from hospital to start a period of convalescence.

NEWMARKET

HYPERION'S
2.35 BUSY FLIGHT, who demonstrated that he is不堪重负 when beating Kalaboo by 1½ lengths with the useful Minda Music better off today and the market leader in the selection) a furlong lengths back in third in the Listed Troy Stakes over a mile and a half at the Doncaster St Leger meeting in September, has the popular vote to confirm those placings here. Trainer Mike Smith is disappointed in the latter.

and well, having had a break after the Moony, and I am sure the seven furlongs will be well within his compass," he said: "both Frankie and Walter Swinburn feel that it would suit him at this

stage of his career, and I would even see him as a Guineas horse."

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Charles Wells Rated Handicap — Newmarket 3.05

Name (Connections)	Coral	William Hill	Ladbrokes	Total
Don Bosco (M Shattock)	9.4	9.4	9.4	2.1
BUDDY BOSS (D Hales)	9.3	9.3	9.3	2.3
BUZZ BEE (T Channon)	7.3	8.1	8.3	15.2
LAST PRAIRIE (D Edwards)	15.2	12.1	8.1	9.3
MAESTRO (J O'Connor)	8.1	9.2	8.3	8.1
MARSH WREN (P Ward)	10.4	12.1	11.1	12.3
REINDEER (D Hedges)	12.1	12.1	10.3	12.3
SPRING (W O'Gorman)	14.1	12.7	10.3	14.1
STORY BOSS (J Arden)	16.2	18.1	18.1	18.1
WADDELL (D Ferguson)	16.1	20.1	20.1	16.1
WEED (P Moore)	20.1	20.1	20.1	20.1
WIND (S Wharton)	16.1	16.1	11.1	20.1

Each race a 10th place bonus 1-2-3

James Levett Handicap — Newmarket 4.15

Name (Connections)	Coral	William Hill	Ladbrokes	Total
PAUL FENWICK (R. Cawley)	11.2	5.7	11.3	3.1
SPRING FLING (A. Parker)	7.2	7.2	7.2	7.2
SWINGING SEASIDE (D. Tindall)	11.2	13.3	11.1	11.1
TOMMY (J. Dettori)	7.3	7.3	6.3	7.3
WEED (R. Hales)	8.1	8.1	8.1	8.1
WILLY (C. Parker)	10.5	11.1	11.1	11.1
WILSON (A. Stewart)	10.1	10.1	10.1	10.1
ZIGGY'S DANCE (J. Cawley)	16.1	14.1	14.1	14.1
ZIGGY'S DANCE (J. Cawley)	12.1	15.1	15.1	15.1
ZIGGY'S DANCE (J. Cawley)	26.1	26.1	26.1	26.1

Each race a 10th place bonus 1-2-3

JAMES LEVETT HANDICAP (CLASS C) £10,000

Name (Connections)	Coral	William Hill	Ladbrokes	Total
PAUL FENWICK (R. Cawley)	11.2	5.7	11.3	3.1
GOLD DUST (D. Hales)	12.1	12.1	12.1	12.1
PROSPERO'S COVE (B. G. S. S. Cawley)	11.2	11.2	11.2	11.2
SPRING FLING (A. Parker)	7.2	7.2	7.2	7.2
SWINGING SEASIDE (D. Tindall)	11.2	13.3	11.1	11.1
WEED (R. Hales)	8.1	8.1	8.1	8.1
WILLY (C. Parker)	10.5	11.1	11.1	11.1
WILSON (A. Stewart)	10.1	10.1	10.1	10.1
ZIGGY'S DANCE (J. Cawley)	16.1	14.1	14.1	14.1
ZIGGY'S DANCE (J. Cawley)	12.1	15.1	15.1	15.1
ZIGGY'S DANCE (J. Cawley)	26.1	26.1	26.1	26.1

Each race a 10th place bonus 1-2-3

4.15 JAMES LEVETT HANDICAP (CLASS C) £10,000

Name (Connections)	Coral	William Hill	Ladbrokes	Total
PAUL FENWICK (R. Cawley)	11.2	5.7	11.3	3.1
GOLD DUST (D. Hales)	12.1	12.1	12.1	12.1
PROSPERO'S COVE (B. G. S. S. Cawley)	11.2	11.2	11.2	11.2
SPRING FLING (A. Parker)	7.2	7.2	7.2	7.2
SWINGING SEASIDE (D. Tindall)	11.2	13.3	11.1	11.1
WEED (R. Hales)	8.1	8.1	8.1	8.1
WILLY (C. Parker)	10.5	11.1	11.1	11.1
WILSON (A. Stewart)	10.1	10.1	10.1	10.1
ZIGGY'S DANCE (J. Cawley)	16.1	14.1	14.1	14.1
ZIGGY'S DANCE (J. Cawley)	12.1	15.1	15.1	15.1
ZIGGY'S DANCE (J. Cawley)	26.1	26.1	26.1	26.1

Each race a 10th place bonus 1-2-3

4.50 FURTHER FLIGHT HANDICAP (CLASS C) £8,000 added 1m

Name (Connections)	Coral	William Hill	Ladbrokes	Total
PAUL FENWICK (R. Cawley)	11.2	5.7	11.3	3.1
GOLD DUST (D. Hales)	12.1	12.1	12.1	12.1
PROSPERO'S COVE (B. G. S. S. Cawley)	11.2	11.2	11.2	11.2
SPRING FLING (A. Parker)	7.2	7.2	7.2	7.2
SWINGING SEASIDE (D. Tindall)	11.2	13.3	11.1	11.1
WEED (R. Hales)	8.1	8.1	8.1	8.1
WILLY (C. Parker)	10.5	11.1	11.1	11.1
WILSON (A. Stewart)	10.1	10.1	10.1	10.1
ZIGGY'S DANCE (J. Cawley)	16.1	14.1	14.1	14.1
ZIGGY'S DANCE (J. Cawley)	12.1	15.1	15.1	15.1
ZIGGY'S DANCE (J. Cawley)	26.1	26.1	26.1	26.1

Each race a 10th place bonus 1-2-3

4.00 UPHAM NURSERY HANDICAP (CLASS E) £8,000 added 1m

Name (Connections)

McDermott pushes himself to make the cap fit

Brian McDermott has not followed a conventional route towards the first Great Britain cap which he will win against Fiji in Nadi tomorrow. The Bradford Bulls prop comes from a rugby league family – two of his brothers were professionals – but his own involvement was interrupted by minor matters like five years in the Royal Marines and a career as a boxer.

Less than a year ago, it also seemed that McDermott was on the verge of being shown the door at Bradford. "Every other player seemed to be getting a full-time contract, so I went to see Brian Smith, who told me that he wasn't sure I was going to be suitable for Super League," he recalled. "I asked

him to give me until Christmas to prove him wrong."

Long before the decorations went up, McDermott had done just that, the then Bradford coach approaching him after one particularly impressive performance against Warrington to tell him: "You've got yourself a contract."

His form during the first Super League season made him an only mildly surprising selection for Great Britain's tour and his display in the heat and humidity of Mt Hagen in the first match in Papua New Guinea, is something which has lodged in the mind of the tour coach, Phil Larder. "All our props who were used that day played out of their skins," McDermott

said. "Any one of us could have made it into the Test team."

However, it should be McDermott in tribute to the rapid progress made by one of the game's late developers. He played only until the age of 12 with the Eastmoor amateur club in Wakefield, where his fellow tourist, Alan Hunt, was a team-mate until boxing and later the Marines took over.

The experience he accumulated before his return to the game on his discharge gives him a different perspective on the tour and on rugby league in general. "I went all over the world with the Marines and I didn't realise how much I was missing it until I came on this tour," he said. "When you go to

Dave Hadfield on a former Marine's unusual route to his first rugby league Test place

third world countries, you always get a very good welcome, because they don't have a right lot else in their lives. I enjoyed that in the Marines and I'm enjoying it on tour."

Training and tiring as a professional boxer should also, in theory, help him to take the rigours of his other sport in stride. "I always thought that, having been in the ring, I'd never get fazed by anything in rugby league, but as I go further

and the stakes get higher, I'm getting more and more nervous before matches."

If that is the case, McDermott should be distinctly jumpy tomorrow, before the biggest match of his career. He is one of two new caps in Great Britain's 17, the other being the 20-year-old Sheffield centre, Keith Senior, another who has impressed in his outings so far. Larder is living up to his declaration that changes will be made if form demands it.

The other adjustments from the side which beat Papua New Guinea last Saturday see the ever-reliable Daryl Powell win his 30th cap, with Hunt, who is recovering from a back injury, moving to the wing. Paul

Sculthorpe replaces Chris Joynt in the second row, a tribute to his maturity as a player at the tender age of 19, while Mick Cassidy and Steve Molloy are promoted to the bench.

Fiji delay finalising their team, but Joe Dakuitonga – one of three Sheffield Eagles teammates facing Senior and the Great Britain prop, Paul Broadbent – said that this is the best Fijian side yet, far better than the one beaten 46-0 by England in the World Cup last October.

Fiji's most celebrated player is Canberra's Noa Nadruku, someone so renowned that his drivers announce the fact when they go through his home village. He withdrew last night for unspecified personal reasons, leaving Manoa Thompson, who was briefly with Warrington, to take over the captaincy.

The British camp have dismissed rumours that a rejection of the Super League appeal in Sydney today could cause the Test to be called off as disqualification from the Australian Rugby League. Plans are afoot to add one or more matches in Australia to the tour if the appeal succeeds.

Clive Griffiths, the Great Britain assistant coach, will be looking for a new club job when he returns, following the decision of South Wales not to take up the offer of a place in the First Division as a consolation prize for the Super League

place that was offered and withdrawn.

TESTS (TMR): Samoa (Bullock); Tonga (Healey); Thailand (St Helens); Papua New Guinea (Warrington); Scotland (Sheffield); France (St Helens); Ireland (Sheffield); Argentina (Sheffield); Australia (Macclesfield); South Africa (Warrington); Farrell (Wigan); Sabbath; Smith (Casterton); Senior (Sheffield); Cassidy (Wigan); Molloy (Sheffield).

Grand Slam pay cut for women

Tennis

Once the guardians of equal pay in tennis, the organisers of the Australian Open announced yesterday that next year's women's singles champion would have to accept a pay cut.

The men's singles champion at the first Grand Slam tournament of the year will receive £305,000, an increase of £12,000 over the prize-money handed to Boris Becker for his victory this year. The women's champion next January will get £282,000 – £10,500 less than was earned by Monica Seles this year.

The organisers' decision ahead of the 1996 tournament to pay men more than women after six years of equality provoked threats of a boycott by leading women players. The Olympic champion, Lindsay Davenport, described the move as a "huge step backwards".

But the tournament director, Paul McNamee, said yesterday: "For a number of reasons, including economic, we do not pay equal prize-money at this point in our history."

As a percentage of men's prize-money, the women's pot has been marginally increased. Total prize-money will be about five per cent higher at £5m.

Richard Krajicek and Steffi Graf, the current Wimbledon singles champions, both had victories yesterday. The Dutchman Krajicek beat Australia's Patrick Rafter 6-4, 6-2 in the Singapore Open and advanced to the quarter-finals.

Graf lost the first set against Austria's Judith Wiesner before winning 1-6, 6-3, 6-2 in the quarter-finals of the Leipzig women's tournament.

Graf, 27, whose father is on trial for tax evasion, held a 30 minute online news conference with up to 40 million Internet users potentially able to quiz her. The event was transmitted in pictures and sound direct from one of the halls in the Leipzig trade fair complex.

Mark Miles, the ATP Tour chief executive, has warned players they could face immediate default for abusive on-court behaviour in future. In an open letter to the players Miles praises them for their support of community projects, but reminds them to watch their conduct.

Woosnam considers surgery

Golf

an Woosnam, still challenging Colin Montgomerie for the European No 1 spot, believes he may need surgery on his injured back once the European Tour ends later this month.

Yet, despite the pain, the 38-year-old Welshman shot a three-under-par 69 at the Linde German Masters in Berlin yesterday, one shot better than Montgomerie.

Woosnam's 69 left him only three shots off the pace behind five joint leaders – fellow Welshman Mark Mouland, Irishman Paul McGinley, France's Marc Farry, England's Peter Baker and the Argentinian Jose Cosses, who all took advantage of one of the easiest courses on the Tour to shoot 66.

Despite his good score, Woosnam was far from pleased. "My back is still very sore and the problem is spreading to my calf muscles," he said. "I don't have any pain in my calves but it seems as though they are burning up and I can hardly walk 100 yards without feeling them."

"I can't hit long irons with the right timing. I can't get through the ball and can only use my arms. I have been told I really need surgery and I am seriously thinking about it. I am not playing next week and hope to see my surgeon, Brian Simpson, in Cardiff in the next few days to see what he says."

Montgomerie, who is

£143,347 ahead of Woosnam in the Volvo Rankings and looks certain to finish as European No 1 for the fourth successive year, was also unhappy but not because of any fitness problems. The 33-year-old Scot was four under par after 13 holes and poised to challenge for the lead when he had a double-bogey six at the 16th to fall back to two under.

"It was one of those things," he said. "I got a fly out of the rough with my six-iron and went over the back of the green, chipped it back and three-putted from 20 feet." When asked if he was aware that Woosnam was one shot ahead of him his response was sharp. "No, I am not interested in his score. Only my own."

The South African Ernie Els, who will be defending the World Matchplay Championship he won for the past two weeks, at Wentworth in two weeks' time, played with Montgomerie and thanks to his double back nine, shot 68, four under.

Of the five leaders, McGinley will be the most unhappy as his only bogey of the round came at the final hole where he went over the back with his second shot and could not get up and down. Baker, keen to regain a Ryder Cup spot, made his score with four birdies in his last 10 holes while playing partner Cosses had five in the same under.

Mouland joined the leaders with five birdies in his last eight holes, while Farry said: "I just had one of those days where everything went my way. Every time I had a chance of a birdie I putt went in."

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Photograph: Robert Hallam

Whitaker's win becomes family affair

Equestrianism

GENEVIEVE MURPHY reports from Wembley

John Whitaker's 16-year-old daughter, Louise, became the youngest-ever winner of the National Under-21 Championship at The Horse of the Year Show yesterday, when she rode Cowhey Magic Deep Heat to victory.

It was not the most important contest of the day, but it was a major challenge for Louise and

John Whitaker found it more stressful than any other. "It was hard work watching, I'd rather ride round the Olympics than watch Louise jumping in a class like that," he said.

Deep Heat, a mare of 15.2 hands, became Louise's first horse when she started riding her two years ago. First to go in the jump-off, her father had told her to "keep it tight and smooth, without going crazy fast". When the last hut one fence fell, her round was heating up but her opponents failed.

Louise's 13-year-old mother, Louise, had jumped an excellent first round on Belinda, was eliminated for three refusals at the second jump-off fence. That left Louise and Paul Whitaker, 14, from 10 entries.

Henry Turrell, who had

jumped an excellent first round on Belinda, was eliminated for three refusals at the second jump-off fence. That left Louise and Paul Whitaker, 14, from 10 entries.

The overseas challenge here had not looked too formidable but yesterday afternoon's two senior contests nevertheless eluded the British riders. The Welcome Stakes (the first international contest of the meeting) went to Ludo Philippaerts, one of the Bel-

gium contingent who filled five of the top nine places.

Some riders ambled round on a schooling exercise – but not the Belgians, whose Frans Mathys was the long-time leader on Ivoiro. Nick Skelton, jumping five from the end on Sublime, seemed to have thwarted the visitors when he took the lead by 1.6sec. But Philippaerts, riding at The Horse of the Year Show for the first time, promptly put the Belgians in front again with the speedy mare Trudo Janquinne.

The horse run in the 10th inning and John Smoltz restricted the Dodgers to a single run as the World Series champions overcame Los Angeles 2-1.

Lopez opened the 10th by hitting a pitch from Antonio Sotomayor into the right-centre field. "He hung it a bit and I just tried to drive it," Lopez said of the home run. "I wasn't sure it was out."

David McPherson of South Africa then took the SGC National Grade-B championship on a Belgian-bred horse, Lapino. The seven-year-old was sent to McPherson's Kent yard, where he has been based for more than 10 years, by his then joint owners – Duncan Inglis and Peter Charles.

The horse was "a bit of a bantam" when he arrived in Kent early this year, but McPherson was happy to buy him about a month later and he is now delighted with his purchase.

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THIS SATURDAY AND SUNDAY

Unbeatable coverage of Saturday's Cambridgeshire plus special Sunday Arc De Triomphe edition

The Sporting Life

Grand Slam pay

SPORT

RFU's move on deal with clubs

Rugby Union

DAVID LLEWELLYN

Twickenham last night made its first positive move to try to sort out the long-running dispute with the English Professional Rugby Union Clubs. A statement from the Rugby Football Union announced that they had contacted Epruc with a view to begin negotiations with a view to begin negotiations in order.

The move comes almost exactly a week before the 11 October deadline, the day when Epruc and its member clubs have threatened to break away from the Union. Sources within the RFU were last night sounding notes of cautious optimism about this latest development and Donald Kerr, the chairman of Epruc, said: "I am grateful to have contact made with us. It is nearly three weeks since we last had formal contact with the RFU committee members. We have always been amenable to talks. We approach them in an open, positive, constructive frame of mind."

The RFU is to propose two specific items for consideration: a financial agreement for the next two years and beyond; and a clear partnership for the organisation of the clubs' league and cup competitions, domestically and in Europe, in terms of financial fixtures and future competitions. Twickenham also announced it is to reorganise the RFU's way of working in order to facilitate the professional game.

This last move is as a result of a working party set up specifically to examine the infrastructure of the RFU and it is expected to streamline the cumbersome committee system, which is locked into the old amateur ways and can clog up too easily and slow down development of what is now a rapidly changing game.

The statement continued: "The RFU is determined to avoid a breakaway and will help to ensure a viable future for professional club rugby, while at the same time not disadvantageing the rest of the game. The RFU wants clubs to commit [themselves] to releasing their players for representative duties to an agreed schedule."

That would mean the clubs allowing players to take part in

Divisional matches, something which may prove to be a sticking point, but Epruc still sounded reasonably positive with Kerr explaining: "There will be no preconditions. Our position is that we have asked clubs to obtain the necessary permission, under their constitutions, to leave the Union some time after 11 October - either amicably, or instantly if the RFU adopt a hostile stance."

Twickenham certainly seems prepared to go along with Epruc's desire to take more responsibility for the running of club competitions and affairs in general, but matters of discipline could prove another problem area.

One case has already cropped up involving the Bristol lock Phil Adams who was fined the equivalent of six match fees by his club following a stamping incident at Northampton last month. But it looks as if Twickenham is going to investigate the matter further, the implication being that Bristol were not hard enough.

An RFU spokesman said a disciplinary hearing would be fixed within the next couple of weeks.

Ireland's top 14 clubs have taken England's lead and formed a body to represent their interests. The Irish First Division Clubs' Association has met with the approval of the Irish RFU. But all is not well across St George's Channel. Some English clubs have angered officials of Leinster and Ulster by refusing to release their Irish players to represent their provinces in the European Cup which starts next week.

Northampton and Sale have three players between them and London Irish are considering following suit with their trio. The Ulster coach, Tony Russ, said: "Epruc have ordered the English clubs not to release their players and I am at the sharp end of it."

The European Cup tournament director, Roger Pickering, confirmed that there has been a bid to televise the competition but he would not identify the company, nor the amount, rumoured to be £140m from BSkyB.

Jack Rowell has added props

Will Green (Wasps) and Matt Volland (Northampton) to the 45-man squad for next Wednesday's training session at Bisham

Abbey.

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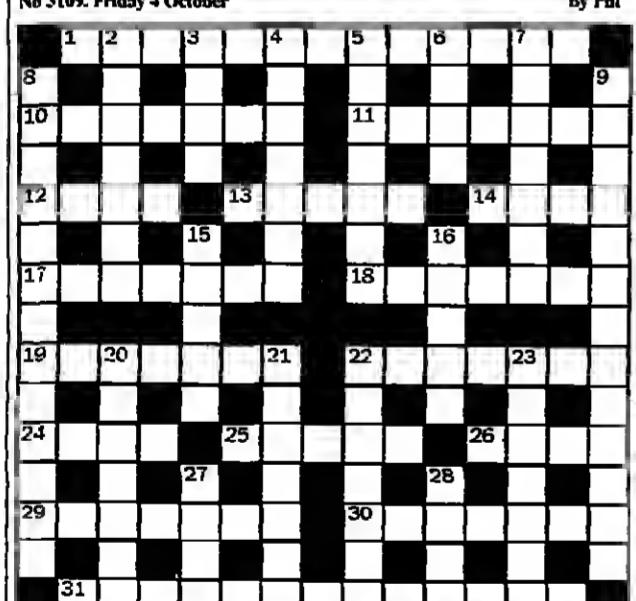
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THE INDEPENDENT CROSSWORD

No 3109. Friday 4 October

By Phil

Thursday's solution



PIESTITILIERIE
ASATNKA
GRAMPIONS TAMP
GREYEOP
REPORT SCULPTING
AEHUDOR
VERNAL PRUDENCE
ATCEEE
TREASURE SECOND
EMIRRSI
SUBEOLITS CHIRPIN
ARIBRE
TRIO CONSUMERS
GSAENYS
FOSSILISED

4 Dissertations about universal subject of Greek myths? (7)
5 The girl has volume put into the French book store? (7)
6 Quick punch caught part of face (4)
7 Chorister without hesitation quavering - but not like this bird! (7)
8 Old coin of the emperor found in March? (5, 8)
9 There's some row about astronomical phenomena (6, 7)
15 See 3 down
16 and 28 Nocturnal illumination dealt with the return of vermin? (5, 4)
20 Foremost of critics make certain disapproving noises? (7)
21 Yonder - it's a girl (7)
22 Rustic American car losing rear end going round North Carolina (7, 6)
23 Little creatures seen in frozen school bedroom? (7)
27 A soft touch is snared by heartless knaves (4)
28 See 16 down

IAN PHILLIPS

reports from Paris

Eric Cantona may have dressed soberly in black for his appearance on France's prime time talk show *Nulle Part Ailleurs* on Wednesday evening but, in true

Cantona fashion, his comments were anything but muted.

He launched into an animated criticism of French football and its officials, cheekily agreed that he was the greatest Frenchman in England and announced that he intends not only to finish his playing days on our shores but also to stay on after retirement.

He may have been invited to

talk about a new Parisian stage

version of *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* which he is co-producing, but the conversation very quickly turned to football and life in England. He started by admitting that when he arrived from France it was difficult to make his niche in the English game. "There wasn't really a place for foreigners," he said. "Now, it's a lot easier."

But, now that he feels at home, he's certainly not planning to leave. He asserted that he has no plans to come back to play in France and when asked what he planned to do after retirement said that, in spite of his reticence about good old English cooking, "I'd like to live in England. I've got used to it now."

As to what he may do after he hangs up his boots, he hinted that he would not rule out



The Premiership is the place to be, but I'm happy with life where I am.
Basement tapes: **Kerry Dixon** on life at the bottom

26

Dettori maintains the whip hand as Bahamian Bounty brings in booty



Frankie Dettori continues his spectacular run of success with a narrow victory aboard Bahamian Bounty (right) in the big race at Newmarket yesterday, the Middle Park Stakes, and will now attempt to maintain the sequence on Classic Cliche in Sunday's Prix de l'Arc de Triomphe

Racing, page 25; photograph, David Ashdown

Blackburn go into denial over Flowers

Football

The noises coming out of Blackburn Rovers had a familiar ring yesterday as they denied that their goalkeeper, Tim Flowers, was about to move to Newcastle United for £4m.

"There is simply no truth in this story whatsoever," Robert Coar, the Rovers chairman, said, early echoing the rumours that followed the departure of Alan Shearer's transfer.

Better news for Rovers and Scotland was that the centre-half Colin Hendry intends to be playing again by early next month, after having had minor surgery on a groin strain.

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